Problems of COMMUNISM

What is New in East Europe?

ALBANIA • CZECHOSLOVAKIA • RUMANIA

EAST GERMANY • BULGARIA

HUNGARY • POLAND

ART IN RUSSIA:

The Old and the Young

VOL. XI No. 3
May-June 1962

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Problems of COMMUNISM

NUMBER 3 VOL. XI
May-June 1962

Problems of Communism is a bimonthly publication. Its purpose is to provide analyses and significant background information on various aspects of world communism today. Opinions expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Government. Any reprinted materials in *Problems of Communism* have been copyright cleared and, unless specific restrictions are noted, may be republished in all countries except the United States and Canada. Subscriptions or single copies may be obtained from the distributing sources noted at the bottom of this page. Comments and suggestions from readers should be addressed to:

The Editors, *Problems of Communism*
United States Information Agency
1776 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington 25, D. C.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

De-Stalinization in Eastern Europe
Albania: An Outcast's Defiance, *by William E. Griffith* 1
East Germany: Lesson in Survival, *by Melvin Croan* 7
Bulgaria: The Value of Scapegoats, *by Boris Christoff* 13
Rumania: Don't Rock the Boat!, *by G. M. Razi* 18
Czechoslovakia: The Past Reburied, *by Ivo Duchacek* 22
Hungary: Pressures from Above, *by Paul Landy* 27
Poland: A Matter of Timing?, *by Adam Bromke* 33

THE SOVIET UNION

Art and Artists in the USSR
Forbidden Fruit, *by Nina Juviler* 41
The Young vs. the Old, *by Vladimir Slepian* 52

BOOKS

What Is Left of the "Left"?, *by William C. Gausmann* 61
A Hungarian Don Quixote in Moscow, *by George Gömöri* 63

PLEASE NOTE:

Outside the United States, *Problems of Communism* may be obtained from the nearest office of the United States Information Service. For sale within the United States by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C. Price per copy: $.35. Subscription price: $1.50 a year. Additional $.50 for foreign mailing.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

De-Stalinization in Eastern Europe

EDITORS' NOTE: The following articles survey the reactions in the Communist-ruled countries of East Central Europe to the 22nd Congress of the CPSU. They reveal a pattern of uniformity in only one respect: The Moscow Congress has produced few dramatic changes in the countries affected, a fact which—except in the special case of Albania—is surely being noted with gratification in the Kremlin as well as in the party headquarters of the East European capitals. But here the uniformity ends. The responses of the different regimes to the challenge of Khrushchev's second de-Stalinization campaign have varied widely, depending largely on the nature of the adjustments that followed the first attack on Stalin at the 20th Congress.

Thus, in Hungary and Poland, where the Stalinist regimes had disappeared in the upheavals of October 1956, the mandate of the 22nd Congress simply served to sanction the political trend already established. However, in East Germany, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia, where the Stalinist regimes remained virtually intact in personnel and political orientation, the latest Moscow Congress engendered tortured exculpations of the leaders, a frantic search for scapegoats, and embarrassed banishment of Stalin's name and image from the public scene—but no reform of substance. Albania, which falls into a third and disproportionately important category, refused to pay even this ritual obeisance to the Soviets. Publicly denounced by Khrushchev for sectarian views and terrorist methods, and encouraged on the other hand by Peking, Enver Hoxha has gone over to open defiance of Moscow's ideological and political authority. Stubborn, Stalinist, and rebellious, he is helping to break up the onetime monolithic unity of the Communist bloc.

Albania: An Outcast's Defiance

By William E. Griffith

THE RUPTURE BETWEEN the Soviet and Albanian Communists dates back much earlier than December 1961, when Moscow broke off diplomatic relations with Tirana, or even than last October, when Khrushchev for the first time publicly denounced the Albanian party leadership at the 22nd CPSU Congress.[1] At the very least, it may be traced as far back as mid-June of 1960, when there were definite evidences of its emergence in the interval between the WFTU meeting in Peking and the Rumanian Party Congress at Bucharest.[2]

Albanian party chief Enver Hoxha must already have had an assurance of Mao's support against Khrushchev considerably earlier than this. The major cause of Hoxha's antagonism toward Khrushchev, namely his probably justified fear that the Soviet leader would sacrifice him for the sake of a rapprochement with

Mr. Griffith, currently with the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, Mass.), is the author of a forthcoming book, Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift. *The article is drawn from the latter part of this book.*

[1] For analyses of recent developments involving Albania, see J. F. Brown, "Albania, Mirror of Conflict," *Survey* (London), No. 40, January 1962, pp. 24-41; Stavro Skendi, "Albania and the Sino-Soviet Conflict," *Foreign Affairs* (New York), Vol. XL, No. 3 (April 1962), pp. 471-78; this author's "An

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tito, had already been present in 1956,[3] but at that time Hoxha could not defy Moscow with any prospect of obtaining Peking's backing. By 1960, however, the Sino-Soviet rift had altered the situation and armed Hoxha with the assurance he needed that Mao would stand by him in a rebellion against Khrushchev. In the summer of that year, a partial Soviet economic blockade of Albania was countered by Chinese wheat shipments to that country. This seems to have been followed by unsuccessful Soviet intrigues inside Albania aimed at the overthrow of Hoxha and Shehu.[4] More fuel was poured on the fire at the Communist 81-party conference of November 1960, at which Hoxha—according to subsequent revelations—[5] outdid even the Chinese representative, Teng Hsiao-p'ing, in the fury of his denunciation of Khrushchev.

Soviet-Albanian polemics since the diplomatic rupture of last December have revealed that Khrushchev again intensified economic pressure against Albania in the wake of the 81-party meeting. During the spring and summer of 1961, both the Soviet Union and its East European allies suspended all economic and technical aid to Albania, the Chinese again stepping into the breach with increased assistance to the Hoxha regime. Khrushchev further underlined these economic strictures by a menacing political gesture —the withdrawal of Soviet submarines from their base on the Albanian coast. And in August, in a letter to the Albanian party Central Committee, he charged the Albanian leaders with being "agents of foreign intelligence services." By last October, when the 22nd Congress convened, the mutual hostility between Moscow and Tirana was readily apparent, even though it was still being expressed in a formally "correct"—*i.e.*, not wholly explicit—manner. Meanwhile, there was also a concomitant worsening of Sino-Soviet relations.

Why, then, did Khrushchev finally unleash his open attack on the Albanian Communist leaders at the 22nd Congress? Did he attack them merely as a symbol, a whipping-boy, for Peking? The Albanians certainly served that purpose, but Khrushchev had cause for regarding them as more than just an "enemy substitute." Hoxha's declarations and actions had, in fact, positively contributed to the intensification of the Sino-Soviet dispute: without Albania, it is safe to say that relations between Moscow and Peking would not have declined so far so fast.

Moscow-Peking-Tirana Triangle

Why Albania needs China is self-evident, for without Peking's support Hoxha obviously could not defy Moscow with impunity. But why should China need Albania? The explanation seems to lie in Peking's "fractionalist" ambitions—which, in the author's view, constitute the key issue in the whole Sino-Soviet dispute. The Chinese have made it clear that they claim, and intend to exercise, the right to compete with the Soviet Union for influence and control over other Communist parties on a worldwide basis—in other words, to form a Peking-led "fraction" within the international Communist movement. By backing Hoxha in his defiance of Moscow since the summer of 1960, the Chinese have sought to enforce this claim in practice, and the Soviet leadership has been waging an equally resolute counterattack aimed at forcing Peking to abandon its "fractionalist" activities and pretensions. Albania's is the only ruling Communist party which has unequivocally aligned itself with the Chinese, even the North Korean and North Vietnamese parties having preferred not to commit themselves to either side. The Chinese "fraction" therefore has only one

International Communism?," *East Europe* (New York), Vol. X, No. 7 (July 1961), pp. 3-9, 41-45; T. Zavalani, "The Importance of Being Albania," *Problems of Communism,* Vol. X, No. 4 (July-August 1961), pp. 1-8; Branko Lazitch, "Le dossier du Parti communiste albanais," *Est et Ouest* (Paris), Vol. XIII, No. 267 (November 16-30, 1961), pp. 6-16; Wolfgang Leonhard, "Moskaus albanische Sorgen," *Die Zeit* (Hamburg), March 10, 1961; and Harry Hamm, *Rebellen gegen Moskau* (Verlag für Wissenschaft und Politik, Cologne, 1962).

[2] Shortly before the Rumanian Party Congress (which Hoxha personally boycotted), Hysni Kapo, a member of the Albanian party Politburo, made a pro-Chinese speech in Bucharest on June 22, published in *Zëri i Popullit,* June 23, 1960. This contrasted sharply with a pro-Soviet address delivered by another Albanian emissary, Liri Belishova, in Peking on June 6, a fortnight earlier. (NCNA report, June 6, 1960.) The version published in *Zëri i Popullit,* June 7, omitted the most pro-Soviet passage, thus foreshadowing Belishova's (and Tashko's) purge by Hoxha, which probably occurred shortly after the Bucharest meeting.

[3] This fear was evidenced notably at the April 1956 plenum of the Tirana city party committee: see report on the Tirana treason trial, in *Borba* (Belgrade), May 28, 1961.

[4] See author's "An International Communism?", previously cited.

[5] See E. L. Crankshaw's articles in *The Observer* (London), February 12 and 19, 1961; Donald S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict 1956-1961,* Princeton University Press, 1962, pp. 345-69; and report by Victor Zorza in *The Guardian* (Manchester), June 9, 1961, on the Hoxha-Khrushchev clash at the 81-party conference. A documentary brochure published in January 1962 by the Italian Communist Party, entitled *Interventi della delegazione del PCI alla Conferenza degli 81 Partiti comunisti e operai,* provides valuable additional material on the conference, particularly concerning the issue of "fractionalism."

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

avowed member besides its founders, and to all intents and purposes it would cease to exist if Albania were to desert the Chinese camp.

Thus, it is clear that Khrushchev's all-out attack on the Albanian Communist leadership at the 22nd Congress was prompted by more than frustrated fury at the defiant Hoxha. It also was more than just another anonymous excoriation of Chinese ideological positions *in abstracto*. By specifically attacking the single Communist party which had taken the Chinese side, Khrushchev undoubtedly sought to compel all Communist parties to "stand up and be counted" on the Albanian (and thus the Chinese) issue, in the hope of forcing Mao into a humiliating retreat. Yet, the Khrushchev tactic thus far seems to have failed in its objective, for several reasons. For one thing, because it still was indirect so far as the Chinese were concerned, it enabled both them and the "neutralist" Asian Communist parties to protest the public manner of Khrushchev's assault on a fraternal party while declining to take a position on the content of his accusations. For another, the condemnation of the Stalinist Albanians had the converse effect of encouraging the "right-wing" Communist parties, notably the Poles and Italians, to press for even greater Soviet tolerance of their own deviations in the opposite direction.

Hoxha to the Counterattack

Hoxha's response to the Khrushchev attack was quick and furious. Traditional Balkan passion, the recklessness of desperation, and Stalinist fanaticism combined to produce a foaming torrent of epithets and an all-embracing ideological counterattack from Tirana. Khrushchev became "a plotter," "an ordinary putschist," "a real Judas" and "traitor to Marxism-Leninism," who had been led by ideological revisionism and personal weakness to the point of contributing to "the slanders of the imperialists and of Tito." [6]

In a public speech on November 7, 1961, Hoxha was fanatically defiant.[7] His basic accusation against "N. Khrushchev and his group" went to the core of the Soviet leader's problem and ideological battle with Mao: the source of authority and legitimacy in the international Communist movement. According to Hoxha,

. . . the greatest evil is that the Russians try to impose at any cost their opportunistic concepts on all the Communist and workers parties. . . .

Turning to policy issues, Hoxha charged that Khrushchev's so-called "creative Marxism" "banished the cause of the revolution" and removed peoples "from the struggle for their national liberation." The Soviet leader, he continued, has incorrectly maintained that the nature of imperialism has so changed and the perils of thermonuclear war become so great that peaceful coexistence must be not merely a tactic but "the general line" of international Communist policy. This defeatist position, in turn, had led Khrushchev to overestimate the danger of "struggling" against the United States, specifically on the Berlin and German issues. And his unjustified attack on "the great Marxist-Leninist, J. V. Stalin," Hoxha went on, "was made . . . to open for himself a wide path for the implementation of a revisionist and anti-Marxist policy . . ."

Hoxha's polemical fury predictably reached its crescendo in linking Khrushchev with Tito. All of Stalin's "conclusions" about the Yugoslav leader (*i.e.*, as set forth in both the 1948 and 1949 Cominform resolutions), have been proven correct, he asserted, and "the Tito clique of imperialist lackeys" has remained an *agentura* of the imperialists. Notwithstanding this, Khrushchev has been conspiring with Belgrade, as with Athens, to remove the Albanian leadership, destroy Albania's independence, and partition its territory.

Here Hoxha struck a theme which was well calculated to rally the public behind his hitherto none too popular regime. For the Albanians are united by a traditional fear and hatred of their Yugoslav and Greek neighbors. Albania first became an independent nation because Austria-Hungary, Britain, and Italy overrode Serb, Montenegrin, and Greek ambitions to devour it. In 1919 it remained independent because US President Woodrow Wilson refused to recognize the 1915 Treaty of London providing for its partition. Zog later ruled the country (as President and, after 1928, as King) first under Yugoslav and then under Italian protection. After Albania came under Axis military occupation in World War II, Hoxha chose Tito in preference to Hitler and Mussolini, but as soon as the opportunity presented itself in 1948, he deserted Tito for Stalin. Finally, becoming convinced that Khrushchev's rapprochement with Tito after 1955 presaged his (Hoxha's) playing the lady to Tito's tiger, he grasped the first chance, in 1960, to desert Khrushchev for Mao.

[6] The flood of anti-Khrushchev invective in the Albanian press has shown no abatement since the Congress. For two recent examples, see the *Zëri i Popullit* editorials, "Whom do the Views and Actions of N. Khrushchev Serve?", March 2, 1962; and "Khrushchev Has Been Devoting His Time to Aggravating the Divergencies with our Party and State Instead of Solving Them," March 25, 1962.

[7] Published in *Zëri i Popullit,* November 8, 1961; reprinted in *Jen-min jih-pao* (Peking), November 17, 1961.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To preserve its independence, Albania needs a protector powerful enough to save it from Moscow but also distant enough to have neither the desire nor the ability to swallow Albania for itself. At least so long as a total Sino-Soviet break does not occur, Communist China offers the best available protection against Moscow—if not against Albania's hostile neighbors—and itself presents no threat to Tirana's sovereignty. Thus, Hoxha's option for Peking was entirely natural on both practical and ideological grounds. And since this option means defiance not only of the Russians but also of their potential ally, the hated Serbs in Belgrade, and at the same time promises greater national independence for Albania within the Communist bloc, Hoxha's popularity at home, like Tito's in 1948, has almost surely risen in the aftermath of the break with Moscow.

Diplomatic Breach

Moscow's post-Congress severance of diplomatic relations with Tirana, though primarily another step in Khrushchev's campaign to force a decisive repudiation of Chinese fractionalism, was more immediately prompted, at least in part, by the Albanians' continued insistence on propagating their own views and denunciations of Moscow within the international Communist movement and the Soviet Union itself. The Soviet action followed right after the dissemination by the Albanian embassy in Moscow of the texts of several Albanian anti-Soviet declarations, including Hoxha's speech of November 7.[8] So far as Soviet-Albanian relations were concerned, however, the diplomatic rupture merely formalized a *de facto* situation which had existed for some time. Immediately on the heels of Moscow's action, all the East European Communist states withdrew their ambassadors from Tirana but did not formally break off diplomatic relations.[9]

In Albania itself, there is no evidence at present that these reprisals have caused any split in the party leadership or any effectual degree of popular unrest. The alliance of Mao and Hoxha continues firm, but the Chinese "fraction" has acquired no new unequivocal adherents since 1960. What cautious and partial support it has received has come only from some of the Asian party leaderships, and these are likely to hew to a generally "neutralist" course unless and until a total Sino-Soviet break forces them to opt unreservedly for either Moscow or Peking.

The formal rupture of Soviet-Albanian relations appears to have terminated Albania's participation in regular Communist inter-governmental organizations, but not in international Communist fronts. The Albanians have reportedly ceased attending meetings of the Warsaw Pact signatories and of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA)—whether voluntarily or not is unclear.[10] On the other hand, they not only attended the Fifth World Congress of the WFTU in Moscow and the Stockholm meeting of the World Peace Council (both held during last December), but also spoke out on both occasions in support of the Chinese.[11]

The chief preoccupation of Albanian foreign policy since the break with Moscow has naturally been the further cementing of protective ties with Peking. From Communist China the Hoxha regime urgently needs continuing economic aid as well as political protection against a renewed Soviet attempt to overthrow it (either directly or via Yugoslavia) and support within the international Communist movement.

But the Albanians have lived dangerously too long to relish the idea of having all their eggs in one basket. China, though distant enough to be a safe ally, is almost too far away to afford adequate protection against dangers closer at hand. Furthermore, China's own economic situation is so near disaster that its

[8] AFP report from Moscow, in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Zurich), November 24, 1961; *cf.* Soviet statement on the diplomatic break, *Pravda,* December 12, 1961.

[9] More recently, the East European satellites have signed renewed trade agreements with Albania: Poland on January 18; Hungary, March 4; Bulgaria, March 5; Czechoslovakia, March 24; and East Germany, April 1 (negotiations with Rumania are under way). The significance of the agreements, though deriving more from the fact of their conclusion than from their content, is still unclear. They may reflect, in part, a minor Soviet gesture of conciliation toward China; and they might also indicate a preference on the part of some of the East European leaderships (in particular, the Polish) to encourage a continuation of Albania's defiance whereby they would gain increased maneuverability vis-à-vis Moscow.

[10] According to Moscow sources, the Albanians have refused to attend these meetings: see I. Medvedev article in *Izvestia,* February 4, 1962; and A. Rumyantsev, "Our Common Ideological Weapons," *World Marxist Review,* Vol. V. No. 1 (January 1962), p. 9. The Albanians insisted, however, that they were not invited to the Warsaw Pact meeting: see *Zëri i Popullit,* February 9, 1962.

[11] A speech by the Albanian delegate at the WFTU Congress, Kocani, was reported in the Italian Communist organ *l'Unità,* December 13, 1962, and was publicized in China by Radio Peking the same day. *Zëri i Popullit* for December 13 did not cover the speech in its report on the Congress. The Albanian representative's speech at the WPC meeting was reported to Asia by NCNA, December 22, 1961, but again did not appear in *Zëri i Popullit.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ability to continue adequate material assistance is problematical. Under these circumstances, Hoxha would have to be foolhardy indeed not to see the wisdom and necessity of broadening Albania's sources of economic assistance and of trying, if not to come to friendly terms with its neighbors, at least to keep them divided. It was, of course, to be expected that Albania's traditional enemies would immediately explore any new opportunities created by the Soviet break with Tirana, but at the same time Hoxha had reason for hoping that they would no more be able to cooperate with one another in 1961 than they had in 1912 or 1920.

New Directions in Diplomacy

The Tirana regime has therefore been surveying the possibilities of fruitful diplomatic action. Vis-à-vis Belgrade and Athens the prospects are obviously slim: Yugoslavia would only befriend Albania the better to eat it up, and the immutable cornerstone of Greece's Albanian policy has been the annexation of "Northern Epirus." From Hoxha's point of view, it is Italy which is the least dangerous and at the same time the most able to provide economic aid. Moreover, Italy has always preferred an independent (though weak) Albania to one partitioned or controlled by Yugoslavia and Greece, and Rome also is anxious to expand its international influence.

Hoxha consequently turned first to Rome. He had already made a preliminary approach to the Italians in May 1961, and immediately after the Soviet-Albanian diplomatic break Tirana and Rome concluded a new agreement providing for a 50-percent increase in Italo-Albanian trade.[12] (In view of the already large adverse Albanian trade balance with Italy, the new accord perhaps comes closer to being an agreement for aid than for a normal expansion of trade.) There have also been reports of unofficial Albanian moves to sound out the Italians regarding the establishment of transport between Tirana and Bari.[13] (Now that the Albanians can no longer travel to Peking via Moscow, they have no alternative but to go via Italy, the Middle East, and the Rangoon-Kunming airline into China.)

But Hoxha evidently does not intend to limit his efforts towards expanding Albania's Western contacts only to Italy. In a significant editorial published on January 9, 1962, the central party organ *Zëri i Popullit* declared:

We want to establish diplomatic relations and to have good trade, cultural, and other relations with all capitalist countries that want them, especially with our neighbors, on the basis of strict respect for the accepted principles of peaceful coexistence. . .

In line with this declaration, Tirana has proceeded to reactivate trade relations with France and West Germany,[14] to station a permanent ambassador in Vienna[15] (neutral Austria, once a traditional protector of the Albanians against the Serbs and Italians, is now prosperous enough again to resume a similar role if it wished to do so), and to make moves towards better relations with Great Britain.[16] There are, however, no indications of any Albanian overtures for a rapprochement with Washington, and in view of Communist China's implacable hostility towards the United States, this seems unlikely at least in the foreseeable future.

There have even been some recent indications that Albania and Greece, despite their traditional enmity, may be moving toward an accommodation that would end the official state of war still existing between them. Notwithstanding the reawakening of Greek interest in the "recovery of Northern Epirus" as a result of Moscow's abandonment of Hoxha, Greece at the same time does not wish to see Italy or Yugoslavia, or both, move into Albania first; indeed, it might even prefer Hoxha to a regime under Italian or Yugoslav control. Athens realizes, moreover, that its major NATO allies would hardly countenance any Greek military adventures in Europe's traditional Balkan tinderbox. As for the Albanians, now dependent solely on the protection of a remote Chinese ally, common sense dictates a desire to minimize the risks in their relations with their neighbors.

In this light, considerable significance attaches to reports early this year that the Greek government had intimated its willingness to shelve the issue of Northern Epirus for the sake of a rapprochement with Albania,[17] and to a later statement by Premier Karamanlis in the Greek parliament that Athens was prepared to end the state of war between the two countries

[12] *Bashkimi* (Tirana), December 8, 1961.

[13] "Oggi in Italia" broadcast (in Italian to Italy), January 20, 1962.

[14] *L'Aurore,* January 11, 1962. Albania is also seeking to develop trade with the Near East and Africa: a protocol on exchange of goods between Albania and Ghana was signed in Accra on February 16 (*Zëri i Popullit,* Feb. 18, 1962), with Egypt (*ibid.*, March 25, 1962) and with Iraq (*ibid.*, March 27, 1962.)

[15] *Christian Science Monitor* (Boston), January 24, 1962. Diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level have also been established with Morocco (*Zëri i Popullit,* February 13, 1962.)

[16] AFP report from Belgrade, January 13, 1962.

[17] *The Economist* (London), January 20, 1962; *The Times* (London), January 23, 1962.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

if a suitable formula could be agreed upon.[18] For its part, the Tirana regime has made an initial conciliatory gesture by permitting the repatriation of a number of Greeks who had been in Albania since the Greek civil war.[19] As of the time of writing, it has not yet responded to the Karamanlis overture.

Relations with Yugoslavia

Of Albania's neighbors however, Yugoslavia is certainly the one most involved in the new situation created by the Soviet-Albanian break. On the one hand, Tito is totally and permanently hostile to Hoxha, Shehu, and their group, and Belgrade's prestige still smarts from the Albanian Communists' 1949 execution of Xoxe as a "Titoist" and from the failure of Yugoslav-encouraged efforts in 1956 and 1960 to overthrow Hoxha. In addition, there is the problem of the Kosmet region which, with its hundreds of thousands of Albanian inhabitants, constitutes an Albanian *irredenta* within Yugoslavia's borders. On the other hand, Tito has too great an interest in preserving the Balkan status quo to be disposed to take any flagrant risks. It therefore seems highly unlikely that he will seek to exploit Albania's increased isolation by a new attempt at Hoxha's overthrow, whether by military force or even indirectly by a Belgrade-inspired *coup d'état*.

There are, indeed, signs in the contrary direction. Although diplomatic relations between Belgrade and Tirana remain minimal, Yugoslavia has not been content merely with repeated disavowals of any hostile intent towards Albania, but has officially indicated its readiness to normalize those relations and to resume trade exchanges between the two coutnries.[20] It has also recently announced a considerably increased degree of autonomy for the Kosmet,[21] presumably in order to counteract any potential tendency among its inhabitants, now that Albania is no longer a Soviet satellite, in favor of rejoining their independent and defiant brethren across the border. On the other hand, recent trials of alleged pro-Tirana conspirators in the same region underline Belgrade's determination to keep the Kosmet within the Yugoslav state.[22]

Albania's revolt against Moscow has had the further side-effect of reviving historic frictions among its neighbors. Perhaps the most striking evidence of this has been a renewed flare-up of Yugoslav-Greek polemics about Macedonia.[23] While in part this was instigated by over-eager Macedonian nationalists in Skoplje, the reactions on both sides represent implicit mutual warnings not to disturb the status quo either on the Greek-Yugoslav frontier or in Albania.

Predictions are best avoided regarding Balkan politics, except perhaps for the one traditionally attributed to the British traveller returning to his London club after a Continental tour: "There'll be trouble in the Balkans in the spring!" The Balkan political scene does indeed appear somewhat more disturbed than usual as a result of the Soviet-Albanian break. However, the thermonuclear age tends to freeze national boundaries and to deter—to some extent—even local wars. All in all, the new situation in south-central Europe seems unlikely to erupt into serious armed conflict, provided Hoxha can obtain sufficient outside assistance and protection to keep his economy functioning and his neighbors quiet.

---

[18] *The Scotsman,* February 6, 1962. The pro-government Greek newspaper *Acropolis* (quoted in *Borba,* January 3, 1962) reported that there has been "no other manifestation whatever on the part of Greece" with regard to the resumption of diplomatic relations with Albania.

[19] *Zëri i Popullit,* January 1, 1962; *The Times,* December 29, 1961.

[20] *Borba,* January 13 and 20, 1962.

[21] TANYUG news agency report, January 17, 1962.

[22] *Politika* (Belgrade), September 15, 1961.

[23] *The Economist,* January 13, 1962; *Borba,* December 30, 1961.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

East Germany: Lesson in Survival

By Melvin Croan

DESPITE EAST GERMAN huzzas to the "glorious perspectives for building communism" outlined in the Party Program adopted by the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, the Congress itself caused the East German Communist regime real political disappointment and the Ulbricht leadership considerable personal embarrassment.

The sense of chagrin engendered by Khrushchev's use of the Congress forum to rescind yet another deadline on the Berlin issue is understandable enough. On the eve of the Moscow assembly, the propagandists of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) were hammering away on the theme of the inevitability of a peace treaty between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic by the end of 1961 at the latest. In his own speech at the Congress, Ulbricht likened West Berlin to "a second Sarajevo" and designated the conclusion of a German peace treaty as "the most urgent task." [1] At the turn of the year, however, the SED party boss openly acknowledged that during 1961 the East German regime had failed to achieve, as he put it, "*all* that we had set as our goal in the interest of peace." [2]

The practical significance of Ulbricht's frustration over Berlin cannot be understood apart from his personal embarrassment at the second round of de-Stalinization. In order to secure his own position, seemingly threatened anew by the mere revival of the issue of Stalinism, Ulbricht once again, as in the past, relied upon a dynamic program of internal socio-economic transformation together with an external policy of militancy against the West. But Khrushchev's retreat from the previous German timetable all but denied Ulbricht the use of one of these crucial strategies. It is all the more remarkable that even with this handicap the East German leader appears to have successfully scattered the political storm clouds that threatened to break over his head.

Needless to say, Ulbricht could not have coped with the domestic consequences of the 22nd Congress without having had continued Soviet endorsement. But even with that endorsement, the situation required the full measure of his talents as a Communist politician because the SED leadership was entirely unprepared for what transpired in Moscow. While the Congress was in session, the party organ *Neues Deutschland* daily carried the full texts of several major speeches and summaries of many others. But Khrushchev's public castigation of the Albanians, Chou En-lai's vigorous rebuttal (carefully deleted in the summary of Chou's remarks which appeared in *Neues Deutschland*), the tirades against the Soviet "anti-party group," and, even more, the renewed onslaught against Stalin, all produced such excitement among the East German party faithful that many SED functionaries, especially in the higher echelons, went directly to *Pravda* for fuller news of the Congress proceedings.[3] In fact, the SED did not develop a firm official line on any of these developments until well after Ulbricht's return from Moscow, where he tarried for several days after the Congress for personal consultations with Khrushchev.

Pointed Questions and Devious Answers

The immediate effect of the Congress proceedings was to pose several vital questions: Why another campaign against Stalin? To what extent was Stalinism an objective outgrowth of the system of dictatorship

[1] *Neues Deutschland*, October 22, 1961.
[2] *Ibid.*, January 1, 1962. Emphasis in original.

Mr. Croan is a member of the Department of Government at Harvard University. He has contributed to a collection of essays under the title of Revisionism, *edited by Leopold Labedz (Frederick Praeger, New York, 1962), and is currently working on a full-length study of the East German regime.*

[3] See H. Wolf's remarks to the 14th Plenum of the SED Central Committee, *ibid.*, December 5, 1961.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rather than merely a subjective deviation of an aberrant personality? And, closer to home, what were the immediate consequences for the SED? This complex of questions involved the very legitimacy of the East German regime in Communist eyes, no less than Ulbricht's own position. Naturally, therefore, these issues were widely, if somewhat furtively, discussed among both party members and outsiders.

The reaction of the leadership was first set forth in an editorial covering a page and a half in *Neues Deutschland* on November 12 and was even more fully elaborated at the 14th Plenum of the SED Central Committee which met from November 23 to 26. (Because it dealt with a vast range of domestic and international issues, the Plenum was assigned the importance of a Party Conference.[4]) In answer to the first two questions, the pat Soviet explanations were invoked. The eradication of Stalinism was unfinished business left over from the 20th Congress and could properly be continued only at the next regular party congress, namely, the 22nd (the 21st having been an extraordinary one). All outstanding scores with Stalinism needed to be settled, it was said, the better to proceed with the construction of communism. Furthermore, Stalinism was represented as having no connection whatever with the Soviet social and political system.[5]

As far as Stalinism in East Germany was concerned, the SED line was a compound of rank disingenuousness and blatant distortion. There is, to be sure, some validity to the regime's claims that East Germany averted the worst forms of Stalinist intra-party terror. With considerable satisfaction, the SED congratulated itself on having avoided such occurrences as the Rajk and Kostov trials. The leadership insisted, again with some justification, that it had never violated Leninist norms of party life inasmuch as the highest bodies of the SED had always been convened with appointed regularity.[6] On the other hand, there was no mention whatsoever of the liquidation of German Communist exiles in the Soviet Union during the course of the *Yezhovshchina*. To have uncovered that particular issue would at once have raised still unanswered questions about Ulbricht's complicity in the purge of the KPD-in-exile.

Ulbricht and the Cult of Personality

Much more incredible were the dialectical gymnastics that were performed precisely in order to cleanse the leadership's record of its Stalinist odor and to exculpate Ulbricht himself of having fostered his own "cult of personality." In his report to the 14th Central Committee plenum Ulbricht rose to his own defense, citing as proof positive of his anti-Stalinism the fact that in March 1956 he had denounced Stalin as no longer worthy to be called "a classicist of Marxism" and again, in December 1960, had publicly attacked the Albanians for harboring "sectarian conceptions."

But Ulbricht went still further and sought to tar his past opponents and present critics in the SED with the brush of Stalinism. In this endeavor, he dug up anew the alleged sins of two past groups of oppositionists—Zaisser and Hernnstadt, purged in 1953; and Wollweber, Schirdewan, Ziller, and "others", purged in 1958—who had been charged originally with advocating internal relaxation and the pursuit of German national reunification at the expense of Communist power in East Germany. Whatever the truth of the original accusations, Ulbricht now attempted to demonstrate that both these "groups" had been guilty not only of "opportunism" but also—of all things—of dogmatism and involvement with the Soviet "anti-party group." He modestly allowed, by way of contrast, that his own exertions alone had saved the day. Thus:

As is known, Beria came out against the construction of socialism in the German Democratic Republic. . . . Beria became incensed when in 1953 I spoke against his policy on the German question. And also Shepilov at the Higher Party School in Moscow turned against my characterization of the errors of Stalin. . . . The Schirdewan group did not understand that since the rejection of our proposals for reunification in 1952 and West Germany's entrance into NATO, there had taken place a fundamental change in the situation. Sticking to old outmoded positions led to opportunist errors. . . . There also existed for a long time in organizational and cadre work pronounced dogmatism and sectarianism whose chief representative was Schirdewan.[7]

While Ulbricht thus presented himself as an anti-Stalinist of long standing and unimpeachable credentials, his lieutenants devoted themselves to the no less difficult dialectical exercise of proving that his "personal

[4] "Ziel und Weg der DDR," *ibid.*, December 1, 1961. Significantly, the last regular SED Party Conference was convened in March 1956, in the wake of the 20th Soviet Party Congress.

[5] In her remarks to the 14th Plenum, H. Wolf admitted that the question of the roots of Stalinism was a particularly sensitive and dangerous one. She declared, however, that foreign Communists like herself who had lived in the Soviet Union in the 1930's could testify that Stalin's errors bore no relation to the system! (*Ibid.*, December 5, 1961.)

[6] On both these points, see *Neues Deutschland* editorial, November 12, 1961.

[7] Ulbricht report, Part II, *Neues Deutschland*, November 28, 1961.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ist das nicht ein Personenkult? (Ja, das *ist* ein Personenkult!)

Vorwärts mit Genossen Ulbricht!

Lied der Pionierorganisation „Ernst Thälmann" / Zum 12. Jahrestag der DDR dem Genossen Walter Ulbricht überreicht

Frühlingswind und grünen Saaten,
Quell und Bächlein gleichen wir.
Wer nicht brennt nach kühnen Taten,
ist kein echter Pionier.
Doch wer Großes will vollbringen,
der muß lernen voller Fleiß.
Was Gagarin konnt' erringen,
war der Mühe höchster Preis.

Ob wir spielen, singen, lernen,
wir sind immer ganz dabei,
daß die Straße zu den Sternen
unsrer Zukunft Straße sei.
Weckt die Trägen und die Lauen!
Aufgewacht, der Morgen ruft!
Stärke, Mut und Selbstvertrauen
finden wir im Kollektiv.

Unsre Republik zu lieben,
die uns täglich reich beschenkt,
ist uns tief ins Herz geschrieben,
ist uns tief ins Herz gesenkt.
Für den Sozialismus leben,
sei uns allen teure Pflicht,
denn er ist der Menschheit Streben
nach des Friedens reinem Licht.

Refrain:
Thälmann gab uns seinen Namen,
Deutschlands Sohn und Kommunist,
Vorwärts mit Genossen Ulbricht,
der uns Freund und Vorbild ist.

Text: Max Zimmering Musik: Wolfgang Richter
Die Noten zu diesem Lied erscheinen am 13. Oktober in der Pionierzeitung „Die Trommel".

Forward With Comrade Ulbricht!

Song of the "Ernst Thälmann" Pioneer Organization, presented to Comrade Walter Ulbricht on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the GDR.

We are like the seeds, the waters,
Like the winds that come each spring.
He who spurns deeds of greatness
Can't be called a Pioneer.
Yet whoever wants to conquer
Must be bold and diligent;
What Gagarin could accomplish
Was endeavor's highest prize.

If we play and sing and study,
We must always do it well,
For the road to stars above us
Points to our future, too.
Rise, you idle and halfhearted!
Cried the morning, all awake.
We have found in our collective
Courage, confidence, and strength.

Love for our great Republic
That has given us so much
Is a motto that is written
Deep within each heart of ours.
Let us live for socialism—
That's a duty we enjoy,
For it is man's greatest striving,
Freedom's finest, brightest light.

Refrain:
Thälmann's name to us was given—
German son and Communist.
Forward, now, with Comrade Ulbricht,
Our model and our friend.

Text: Max Zimmering;
Music: Wolfgang Richter
Translation (with apologies): A.B.

ACHTUNG: Those of our readers who may wish to sing along with Ulbricht and his Pioneers will find the music in the October 13, 1961, issue of *Die Trommel* (East Berlin). The lyrics, as reproduced above the translation, appeared in the October 7, 1961, issue of *Neues Deutschland*.—Ed.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authority" had nothing in common with any "cult of personality." Their efforts toward this end produced such extraordinary claims in his behalf and such fulsome expressions of adulation that the outside observer may be forgiven for being reminded of the most far-fetched fantasies of the discredited cult of Stalin's personality. Ulbricht's name was repeatedly uttered in the same breath with those of Ernst Thälmann, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht—and Karl Marx.[8] He was hailed as "the decisive exponent of our correct policy," "truly a synonym for the party," "shop steward of an entire people," and the like.[9] And the point of all of this was brutally simple: any critical discussion of the Ulbricht leadership in the light of the new Soviet revelations about Stalin would be mercilessly combatted. As Alfred Neumann, a member of the SED Politburo, expressed it,

. . . all the agitation against our Comrade Ulbricht represents class struggle on the part of the imperialist bourgeoisie against the working class. And if in some cases, regrettable as it may be, even members of our party allow themselves to be influenced by this agitation, hard and firm discussions must be carried on with such comrades and, if necessary, hard organizational conclusions must be drawn. . . . Under no circumstances ought there to be in this question any rotten liberalism.[10]

The clamor raised in Ulbricht's behalf contrasted markedly with the "cartographic de-Stalinization," carried out rapidly and efficiently but with a minimum of fanfare. From Stalinallee in East Berlin to Stalinstadt on the Oder, the name of the disgraced Soviet dictator was everywhere expunged and monuments to his achievements or memory hastily dismantled, often under the cover of darkness.

Antidote to Internal Unrest

With that task completed and the campaign to glorify Comrade Ulbricht still at a high pitch, the SED proceeded to give attention to other problems of internal policy. At the 14th Plenum of the Central Committee, Ulbricht justified a renewed emphasis on political dynamism at home by arguing that the completion of socialism in the GDR could no longer await a solution of the problem of German reunification:

Even if the anti-national policy of the Bonn regime of West German monopoly capitalists and militarists, supported by the SPD [Social Democratic Party] leadership, should prevent German reunification for a long time, *we in the GDR shall complete the construction of socialism and begin the construction of communism.*[11]

In a further effort to divert attention from the gloomy political prospects vis-à-vis West Germany, the leadership laid down the harshest Communist indictment of German social democracy since 1933. Henceforth German Social Democrats were no longer to be considered merely "opportunists" and "reformists," but rather to be regarded as "open supporters of the imperialist system up to the point of preparing a war against the socialist countries."[12] Since this was said to be the case in West Germany, the SED called for an intensification of effort to push forward the "socialist revolution and socialist reconstruction" in the GDR so that "socialism might be victorious first in one part of the country, thus establishing the basis for the future inevitable victory of socialism in all of the country."[13]

The policy of intensifying the totalitarian revolution, which the SED leadership unblushingly admits to have been an efficacious antidote to the menace of revisionism some years ago,[14] represents the party bosses' stock solution for overcoming threats to their political power. In the logic of totalitarianism, this policy is conceptually flawless. Yet the actual achievements of modern dictatorships rarely correspond to the claims of their own ideologues—or, for that matter, to the theories of some scholarly non-Communist critics of totalitarianism.

Recent East German experience is a case in point. During late 1961 and early 1962, the problem of how to maintain the exhilaration of August 13 (the day the Berlin Wall was erected) has proven an increasingly difficult one for the Ulbricht regime. Khrushchev's postponement of the Berlin showdown was quite crucial in this respect, not only because it was a source of deep disappointment to the party hierarchy, but also because the delay and the patent disappointment

[8] See *Neues Deutschland* editorial, November 12, 1961; also remarks of A. Norden at the 14th Plenum, published in *Neues Deutschland,* December 3, 1961.

[9] Almost every participant in the 14th Plenum discussions contributed an encomium of his own. The three cited above were formulated by A. Neumann, H. Wolf, and F. Ebert, respectively.

[10] Address to the 14th Plenum, published in *Neues Deutschland,* December 5, 1961.

[11] Ulbricht report, Part I, *ibid.,* November 26, 1961. (Emphasis in original.)

[12] A. Norden, "Über Politik und Charakter der SPD" (remarks to the 14th Plenum), *ibid.,* December 3, 1961.

[13] H. Axen's remarks at the 14th Plenum, *ibid.,* December 2, 1961.

[14] Consider, for example, the following statement in the *Neues Deutschland* editorial of November 12: "The Central Committee never lost sight of the fact that we always have to struggle against right opportunistic, revisionist tendencies. Therefore the Third Party Conference decided to overcome the effects of the cult of personality and of dogmatism in our party and state by moving ahead (*im Vorwärtsschreiten*)."

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the leadership encouraged open popular grumbling about the Wall itself as well as about unresolved economic dislocations at home.[15]

The SED on Khrushchev's Bandwagon

Despite these unwelcome internal consequences of Khrushchev's foreign policy, there have been no indications of any move by Ulbricht to exploit the Sino-Soviet dispute in order to carry his more militant views on Berlin. The harsh realities of Soviet power inside East Germany, together with rather elemental geopolitical considerations, render such a course quite infeasible. Not surprisingly, the 14th Plenum not only heaped praise on Khrushchev personally but also pressed the attack on Albania without for a moment sparing the Chinese. Taking his cue directly from Khrushchev's concluding remarks to the 22nd Congress, Ulbricht told the Plenum that "it would have been desirable and would have helped the Albanian party if the Chinese friends had expressed themselves in some way on the anti-Soviet outpourings and the harm done to the Warsaw Treaty by the leadership of the Albanian Party."[16]

The East German campaign against Hoxha followed closely the pace set by Moscow and did not omit the suspension of ambassadorial representation immediately after the Soviet-Albanian diplomatic rupture.[17] Moreover, to leave no doubt about the official attitude of the SED on the major issues in the Sino-Soviet dialogue, the central party organ republished from *Pravda* the complete texts of two major Soviet ideological pronouncements: Yu. Andropov's article on the "socialist international system" (*Neues Deutschland,* December 5, 1961) and another by N. Inozemtsev on "peaceful coexistence" (*ibid.,* January 20, 1962). It goes without saying that the views of neither the Albanians nor the Chinese have received such treatment.

If anything, it may perhaps be argued that the SED protested its loyalty to the CPSU all too strenuously for those protestations to be believed. The resolution adopted by the 14th Plenum exceeded even Soviet pretensions in claiming that "the leading role of the CPSU is now more apparent than ever before."[18] And besides the Albanians and Chinese, the Italian party, too, incurred its share of East German official wrath for having reawakened visions of polycentrism, a panorama which Hermann Axen denounced as "even more miserable today than in 1956."[19]

Perhaps because of this apparent overzealousness, there has been a curious tendency in the West to regard the prostration of the SED before the Soviet party as something of a coverup for lively disagreements between Ulbricht and Khrushchev. Evidence for this interpretation, however, is at best scanty. It either consists of such unnourishing tidbits as a chance remark of a minor East German government official,[20] or else is based on a quite gratuitous and fanciful gloss given to Ulbricht's observation that "friendly relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union will develop on a higher plane."[21]

---

[15] Ulbricht's attempt to justify the Wall by reference to East Germany's economic distress did not exactly help matters. See his comment that the open border to West Berlin had over the years cost the GDR more than 22.5 billion marks (the cost of training the skilled laborers who had fled East Germany). (Ulbricht report to the 14th Plenum, Part II, *loc. cit.*) An even higher estimate of the economic cost of the exodus from the GDR was presented by Ulbricht in his year-end article in *Pravda,* where he put the figure at more than 30 billion marks, "or almost 40 percent of our national income for 1961." ("Znamia narodnoi demokratii na nemetskoi zemle," *Pravda,* December 30, 1961.)

[16] Ulbricht report, Part I, *loc cit.*

[17] The respective missions in Tirana and Pankow have remained, for the time being, in the care of *chargés d'affaires.* The East Germans expressed particular indignation at Hoxha's charge that Khrushchev was showing cowardice over Berlin, although one suspects that they would have liked to say the very same thing. Denied the possibility, they turned with special ferocity on the Albanian presumption. See O. Winzer's remarks to the 14th Plenum, *Neues Deutschland,* December 2, 1961. On November 29, *Neues Deutschland* carried an article ostensibly congratulating the Albanians on the anniversary of their liberation, but actually cataloguing the sins of the present Albanian leadership. Two days earlier Ulbricht had telegraphed congratulations to Tito on the occasion of Yugoslavia's national holiday.

[18] *Neues Deutschland,* November 28, 1961.

[19] H. Axen, *loc. cit.*

[20] In a television interview in East Berlin, Herr Kegel, of the GDR Foreign Ministry, was asked about the stipulation in a Soviet *aide mémoire* to Bonn that in order to improve relations West Germany did not necessarily have to leave NATO. In reply, Kegel asserted that "one must differentiate between the policy of the Soviet Union and the policy of the German Democratic Republic." By that he meant only to suggest, as the rest of his remarks clearly indicated, that the Soviet proposal applied to the "strengthening of peace in Europe," for which the USSR had prime responsibility, and not to "cooperation or confederation" between the two German states, an issue of primary concern to the GDR.

[21] The observation was made in Ulbricht's report to the 14th Plenum (*Neues Deutschland,* November 26, 1961). He was not, however, anticipating greater independence from the Soviet Union, but just the opposite. Ever since the 12th Central Committee Plenum (March 1961), a drive has been under way to make the East German economy "disturbance-proof" (*störfrei*) against potential West German measures of economic retaliation. This entails integrating the GDR economy more closely with those of the other CMEA countries, especially the USSR.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nothwithstanding the East German leader's greater militancy on Berlin and his long-suffering quest for a Soviet peace treaty, the SED regime is scarcely in a position to exercise effective political pressure on Khrushchev, much less to adopt an independent line in defiance of Soviet wishes. National communism of whatever complexion—be it revisionist or dogmatist—remains a political impossibility in a society which does not even constitute a nation. The GDR represents little more than state power—and indeed, a state power whose policies, from its first establishment of a literal iron curtain along its West German boundary in 1952 through the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, have come to be widely regarded even within the SED, as well as more generally elsewhere, as largely responsible for the deepening division of Germany.

Ulbricht's Political Future

Unquestionably this division remains the single most decisive factor in East German political life. However useful to the Ulbricht regime, the Wall has by no means entirely eliminated the "specially complicated circumstances" attending the building of socialism in the GDR—to use the outrageous jargon by which the SED denotes the problem of nationalism. Yet the unnatural division of Germany also operates to justify Ulbricht's tough course internally and, indeed, to perpetuate his tenure in office.[22]

[22] For a more detailed discussion of the reasons behind Ulbricht's remarkable capacity for political survival in the past, see the author's article, "Ulbricht: Will He Survive?," *East Europe* (New York), December 1961.

Would not Soviet policy regarding Germany profit enormously from the removal of Walter Ulbricht? An affirmative answer to this question is not necessarily persuasive. Ulbricht's effective mastery of the entire party machinery and governmental apparatus is such that if Khrushchev were to oust him forcibly—which, of course, the Soviet leader still has the power to do—the resulting confusion among the *apparatchiki* would be dangerously disruptive to the potentially shaky East German political structure.

Beyond that, moreover, there is the seldom recognized fact that the very presence of Ulbricht in power provides the Soviet Union with a diplomatic card of some value. Once played, it could never again be reclaimed; but as long as the trump is held, that is, as long as the Soviets are able to offer a change in the top East German leadership, it serves to nurture West German hopes of obtaining more substantial concessions on the issues of Berlin and German reunification. By the same token—assuming, as does this writer, that the Soviet Union is unprepared to make any such basic concessions given the present balance of power in Europe—action by Moscow to cashier Ulbricht might well have the undesired effect of making this intransigence irrevocably clear.

In the final analysis, the stability of the Ulbricht regime in spite of the disappointment and embarrassment caused it by the 22nd Soviet Party Congress is nothing other than a reflection of the rigidity of international politics in Germany. Barring either a complete Soviet victory or, alternatively, a total Soviet backdown on the Berlin issue, it seems all too likely that little will change inside the GDR, least of all within the top echelons of the SED.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bulgaria: The Value of Scapegoats

By Boris Christoff

WHEN NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV used the rostrum of the 22nd CPSU Congress to launch his new attack against Stalin and Stalinism and to insist on the final liquidation of the cult of personality, there were bound to be repercussions in the satellite countries. In Bulgaria Todor Zhivkov, First Secretary of the Communist Party, was faced with an embarrassing problem. For over five years he had played the part of arch-liquidator of the cult of personality and symbol of "collective leadership." Yet now a new demonstration of "anti-Stalinist" enthusiasm was called for. The Communist leadership in Czechoslovakia chose to demonstrate its adherence to the new line quite literally, by preparing to remove the body of Klement Gottwald from the Vitkov Hill mausoleum in Prague. But Gottwald's counterpart in Bulgaria, Georgi Dimitrov (who died in 1950) was still paid great homage as the founder and architect of the Bulgarian Communist state, and any move to disturb his resting-place in Sofia would have been a shattering blow to the party.

After the Congress Zhivkov and his followers deliberated nearly a month before convening the Central Committee on November 29, when they decided to remove the still living Vulko Chervenkov from his high party office and influential position in the government. The report which Zhivkov presented to the Central Committee was as usual a lengthy document of more than 32,000 words.[1] He began by heaping unqualified praise on Mr. Khrushchev as the dauntless fighter for Communist ideals and the fountainhead of initiative and wisdom in the Communist movement.

[1] Zhivkov's report to the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party, November 29, 1961, published in *Rabotnichesko delo,* December 2, 1961.

Mr. Christoff, whose "The Bulgarian 'Leap Forward'" appeared in the September-October 1959 issue of this journal, lives in England and has contributed articles on Bulgarian affairs to Soviet Survey (*London*) *and other journals.*

Zhivkov then plunged into a detailed reassessment of Stalin. Up to 1934, he said, it had been possible to take a positive attitude toward the late Soviet leader since he had rendered great service in the preparation and execution of the October Revolution, in the civil war, and in the struggle for industrialization and the collectivization of agriculture. Afterwards Stalin's negative features began to manifest themselves increasingly, until finally he emerged as a "mass executioner and represser of party, state, economic, military and Komsomol (youth) cadres". Now, new and shocking facts revealed Stalin in an even more horrible light. He was guilty of the unpreparedness of the Soviet Union to meet Hitler's sudden attack, the great defeats which followed, and unnecessary loss of life in the war. Indeed, "The Fatherland War would never have ended with victory over Fascism had not the party leadership stepped in and saved the situation."

Bulgaria's Stalinist Scapegoat

Zhivkov was only repeating what had been said at the Moscow Congress, but it was an essential build-up for his attack against Chervenkov, the man whom he had replaced as leader of the Bulgarian CP (see box on p. 16). "The cult of Stalin's personality," he continued, "had also harmed the fraternal Marxist-Leninist parties." Apart from the evils of dogmatism and sectarianism which had isolated the leadership from the broad working masses, "quite a number of seasoned cadres of our party were liquidated as a result of the cult of personality." Much had been done since 1956 to overcome the cult in Bulgaria as well as in Russia, and to restore the Leninist norms and principles of the party. The cult of Chervenkov, however, had not been completely eradicated:

Comrade Vulko Chervenkov is [only] one of the workers of the Bulgarian Communist Party and was most incorrectly and artificially extolled and placed above the col-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lective leadership, above the Politburo and the party Central Committee. This is why it is necessary that all exaggerations of Comrade Vulko Chervenkov's role and services, all remnants of the false halo which still surrounds his personality, must be eliminated so that he may remain in the party and among the people as he is in reality.

Zhivkov went on to enumerate other grave mistakes attributed to Chervenkov in the building of "socialist agriculture and industrialization, and of the cultural life of the country."

On November 30, the day after Zhivkov's report, the decision to expel Chervenkov from the Politburo was made public. The official announcement, published in *Rabotnichesko delo* and other papers, stated:

It has been established that [Chervenkov] has failed to draw from the liquidation of the personality cult in Bulgaria all necessary conclusions concerning his activities, and that as a member of the Politburo . . ., he did not contribute to the final liquidation of the harmful consequences of the personality cult.

The significance of this move, as will be seen, is considerable insofar as internal party affairs are concerned. Having made their first gesture, the Bulgarian leaders proceeded to the inevitable public campaign to show that the party was keeping step with the de-Stalinization decision of the 22nd Congress. First, there was a call for the revision of the *History of the Bulgarian Communist Party,* which in a piece of unfortunate timing had been published shortly before the 22nd Congress. By December 9 an anonymous "review" of the history in *Otechestven Front* indicated that some changes were in preparation:

It is beyond doubt that in the new edition the question of Joseph Stalin's and Comrade Chervenkov's cults will be posed even more correctly, and the question of the false halo created around Chervenkov, which does not fit his real capacity and his actual merits, will be dealt with.

The review simply ignored the fact that the first edition had already been on sale for several weeks. The rewriting of history to accommodate current political demands is, of course, nothing new in the Communist world.

In imitation of Moscow, the regime also moved to efface the taint of Stalin's name from the Bulgarian scene. Orders went out to relabel industrial and other plants as well as towns, streets, and even mountain peaks named after the late *vozhd.* It is interesting to note that whereas dedications to Stalin during his lifetime were always performed with solemnity and "at the request of the toiling masses wanting to express their gratitude to the great teacher and father of the progressive peoples," the reverse process was carried out by terse decrees.

Anti-Revisionism

It is significant but not surprising that the first major attack in the campaign was directed against the intelligentsia, especially the writers. But the position here is paradoxical. It will be recalled that, after the 20th Soviet Party Congress, Bulgaria's writers, though less outspoken than some of their literary brothers under other Communist regimes, expressed their dissatisfaction with increasing vigor against the inadequate measures taken by the party leadership to erase the cult of personality. Following the example of Soviet literary dissidents, they began to criticize the precepts of "socialist realism" and the stultifying practices to

CULT-CARRIER

Upper Right: "We can still meet in our country people who are seriously infected by the germs of the personality cult." (From T. Zhivkov's speech at the Plenum of the CC, BCP).

Below: The halo is gone, but the habit remains.

—*From Sturshel (Sofia), December 8, 1961.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which it had led—*i.e.*, the equation of art with propaganda (*partiinost*), the glossing over of reality (*lakirovka*), the black-and-white criticism of writers' work as "progressive" or "reactionary," the automatic assessment of characters as "good" or "bad" according to their class origin, and so on.[2]

These evils could not all be ascribed to Chervenkov's personality cult, but the revisionists who called for greater freedom of expression were soon silenced, being sternly reminded that the measures taken by the party to free the writers from the paralyzing effects of one-man direction did not, as some claimed, signify any abandonment of the "tested principles of literary guidance by the Central Committee of the party." [3] Thus socialist realism was still to be the basis of creative work.

Today the attack of the Central Committee is no longer directed against the personal tutelage of Chervenkov, but against those writers still refusing to toe the party line. "A truthful literature and art," said *Literaturen Front* (January 3, 1962), "can be created only by those who sincerely and consistently fight for the position of the Communist Party. Writers must be real fighters for socialist truth and must adopt a combative attitude towards the manifestations of bourgeois ideology and revisionism." Such statements, coming after the special "de-Stalinization" session of the Writers' Union convened last December, indicate the confusion of the Central Committee. The session was devoted mainly to a reiteration of Chervenkov's misdeeds, but attacks were also directed against writers who, while rightly denouncing dogmatism and sectarianism during the ferment of 1956, had at the same time cultivated deviationist tendencies. These included die-hards like Hristo Radevski, former secretary of the Union, and liberals such as Emil Manov, who had come under heavy fire during the "Thaw" after the April Plenum. The truth is admitted in a recent report of the Writers' Union Party Bureau, which concludes:

The chief danger remains revisionism, irrespective of what guise and what shapes it may appear in. The manifestations of recidivisms of bourgeois ideology in literature have now acquired new incarnations: objectivism, contemplation, skepticism, indifference, and so on and so forth. It is here that the question of the ideological uplift of creative talents arises with renewed force, more than ever before. Ideological training is becoming a condition without which it is impossible to go ahead with creative activity.[4]

The fact is that while Chervenkov's proclaimed guilt is that he tried to impose his personal views and ideas on the writers, the Central Committee is trying to impose the party line on them—the very shackle which the most talented of Bulgaria's writers fought to shake off during the "Thaw." Here it is worth recalling that although Chervenkov was removed from the premiership in 1956 because of the ravages caused by his personality cult, in 1957 he was appointed Minister of Culture and given the task of suppressing rebellious tendencies that had arisen among writers who had taken the Central Committee's decision to do away with the evils of the personality cult seriously. By the middle of 1958 the intellectual hatches had once more been battened down.

Now, however, there are indications of further unrest. An example is the recent outspoken comment of the young Bulgarian poet, Georgi Dzagarov, who in speaking of the decisions of the 22nd Congress expressed his joy at the triumph of "new values in life over old ones." "How can writers be anything but joyful now that they are to be free from ideological deceit and artistic schematism, of petty tutelage and the manifestations of gross interference? The confining hoop has been removed from their souls." [5] Dzagarov had been brave enough to state the same opinions back in 1958, in the midst of the crackdown on writers: at a general meeting of the Writers' Union he attacked the party interpretation of socialist realism, declaring: "Some comrades have the impression that socialist realism is like Moses' Ten Commandments—everlasting and unchangeable. But this is not true." [6] It is significant that the poet's latest comment was broadcast by Radio Sofia on November 25, only four days before the Central Committee meeting at which Chervenkov was expelled from the Politburo.

Variations on a Cult

On the eve of the 22nd Congress, the Bulgarian press revived the story of the "anty-party group" in the Soviet Communist Party, and in his report to the Central Committee Zhivkov dealt at length with the crimes of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and others, discussing how they had plotted behind the back of the Presidium and the Central Committee to seize the party and state leadership. He stressed that their defeat was inevitable if the liquidation of Stalin's cult was to be complete. Yet by implicitly linking the Soviet

[2] See for example, *Literaturen Front* (Sofia), July 5 and October 11, 1956.

[3] Zhivkov's speech to the Bulgarian Writers' Union, April 9, 1958, published in *Literaturen front*, April 17, 1958.

[4] Report of the Party Bureau of the Bulgarian Writers' Union, January 19, 1962, published in *Literaturen Front*, January 25.

[5] Broadcast over Radio Sofia, November 25, 1961.

[6] *Literaturen Front*, April 17, 1958.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chervenkov and Zhivkov: Profiles in Contrast

When early in 1954 Todor Zhivkov became the First Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party, thus replacing Vulko Chervenkov at the pinnacle of the ruling hierarchy, the party in effect bypassed a score of functionaries who were both more outstanding and better known. A solid if undistinguished reputation as a party bureaucrat was all that the new First Secretary brought to the high office. The contrast with the man he succeeded could not have been greater. A decade earlier Chervenkov had returned to Bulgaria from Soviet exile with his reputation made; Zhivkov's modest record was made after the Communist seizure of power. An accomplished product of the Stalinist school and a slavish imitator of the old dictator, Chervenkov had a forbidding personality which could command devotion, hatred or admiration; Zhivkov had none of these qualities: he was, in fact, little more than an ambitious party regular on the rise.

A soldier's son, Chervenkov became a Communist in 1919 and continued as a youth organizer in the slums of Sofia throughout the years of Stamboliiski's regime. He survived the disastrous Communist rising of 1923 which followed the Agrarians' downfall, but later became implicated in the events surrounding the bombing of Sofia's cathedral and escaped to the Soviet Union. It was in Moscow as a student at the Advanced School of the old OGPU that Chervenkov, then twenty-five, witnessed at close range the rise of Stalin—his idol-to-be. From there his rise was steady. An instructor at the Comintern's Lenin School in the early 1930's he became its director in 1937, and then rose to become chief of the entire school network of the Comintern. After 1941, he served as the principal contributor to a daily radio broadcast beamed from the USSR to Bulgaria throughout the war.

During the first thirty-five years of his life, Todor Zhivkov showed little distinction. Born in 1911 in the village of Pravets, he became a printer at the age of eighteen and joined the Communist Party at twenty-one. He spent the war years working for the party in the same working-class districts of Sofia where two decades earlier Chervenkov had first made his mark. When the Soviet Army entered Bulgarian territory in September 1944 and the Communist-sponsored Fatherland Front was about to take power, Zhivkov, at the head of an armed band, was assigned to cover the War Ministry in Sofia. In the person of Muraviev, the head of the provisional government, the Bulgarian Communists saw their own Kerensky whom they wanted to depose before seizing power. Unfortunately for them and for their official historians of the future, however, there was to be no "assault on the Winter Palace" in Sofia. In a more traditionally Balkan manner, the doors of the War Ministry—where Muraviev's cabinet had found refuge—were not to be stormed but rather to be opened from the inside by fellow-conspirators. This was the closest Zhivkov came to having his name immortalized in the annals of the Bulgarian Communist "revolution". On the morrow of the successful *coup*, he was appointed political secretary—with the rank of colonel—in the new people's militia.

It was during this period that Zhivkov first met the newly returned Chervenkov, now a full member of the Politburo and editor-in-chief of the party's theoretical journal. In March 1945 Chervenkov entered the Central Committee secretariat headed by Kostov, assuming charge of party education and propaganda. While the non-Communist opposition was being ruthlessly eliminated, Chervenkov proceeded to lay the foundations for the full communization of Bulgarian cultural life.

In the meantime, Zhivkov's climb in the party hierarchy proceeded at a slow but steady pace. It was not until the party entered its major postwar crisis that his position began to improve rapidly. His election to full membership in the Central Committee came at the end of 1948, at a time when Kostov was about to go under. He joined the party secretariat in 1950 and the Politburo as full member in 1951. When the Sixth Party Congress early in 1954 "elected" him First Secretary, there was some surprise both inside and outside the party, but in view of Chervenkov's retention of the premiership and his overall power and prominence, Zhivkov's elevation to the highest party post did not generate immediate interest. Obviously, the Bulgarian CP was merely imitating its Soviet mentor: just as in Russia Malenkov and Khrushchev divided the two highest posts in the country between themselves, so in Bulgaria it was thought wise to institute this innovation. That it was pure sham was a matter of public knowledge.

And indeed, despite Zhivkov's nominal position as head of the party, the acknowledged *vozhd*, in the eyes of the *apparatchiki*, remained Chervenkov. It was he who led the Bulgarian delegation to the 20th Party Congress in Moscow while the First Secretary stayed behind. Even after April 1956, when the Central Committee, in an attempt to appease the Yugoslavs, decreed Kostov's posthumous rehabilitation and Chervenkov's demotion to deputy premier, with Anton Yugov becoming the new head of government, Chervenkov continued to exercise great influence. In September 1958 he led a Bulgarian delegation to China and reported favorably on Mao's economic experiments. The Bulgarian version of the "Great Leap Forward" followed soon after. Indeed, Chervenkov's power continued to make itself felt virtually up until his final downfall last November—a fact which undoubtedly accounts for the continuation of vehement attacks against him even since his expulsion from the Politburo and government. The future will tell whether Chervenkov's eclipse at last has enabled the First Secretary to come into his own.

Nissan Oren

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the Bulgarian "anti-party" group, Zhivkov was treading on very dangerous ground because there is absolutely no ideological or political resemblance between the two.

The charges against Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich, as repeated at the 22nd Congress, were that they had "challenged party policy concerning the liquidation of the results of the personality cult and [concerning] the concept of peaceful coexistence between nations with different political and social structures." [7] These accusations could rightly be directed not only against Chervenkov, but also against Prime Minister Yugov and Zhivkov himself, both deeply involved with the personality cult. But they could not be directed against those party members who were purged in 1957 for revisionist tendencies, namely Georgi Tshankov,[8] Dobri Turpeshev, Ionko Panov, and later Nicola Kufardjiev,[9] whose crime was that they had considered the first de-Stalinization measures of 1956 totally inadequate and had accused the Central Committee of being hesitant and halfhearted.

The difference, of course, is that while the Soviet anti-party group is Stalinist, the Bulgarian is anti-Stalinist. Thus, should renewed ferment in the Communist world result in further purges, in Bulgaria the present leaders would be logically forced to attack anti-Stalinists—in other words, to liquidate opponents who remember and criticize the leaders' Stalinist past. On the other hand, the guilt of Zhivkov and company may force upon them a certain measure of "liberalization" in order to save themselves from humiliation and political death.

For the time being, the exclusion from the electoral lists of February 1962 not only of the dogmatists headed by Chervenkov, but also of more liberal-minded party members like Boris Taskov (dismissed from the Politburo and from the Ministry of Trade in 1959 for voicing the opinion of party members who doubted the wisdom of the 1958 economic "Leap Forward"), shows that the present party leadership is waging a struggle on two fronts.

At the same time it has to honor its obligations arising from the Moscow-Tirana quarrel and the Sino-Soviet dispute. Until now relations between Bulgaria and Albania have been friendly—in fact, as recently as March 6, 1962, a new mutually advantageous trade agreement was signed between the two countries. But Zhivkov could not risk being out of step with his master, and the November plenum of the Central Committee was obviously the appropriate place to deliver an attack against Albania that would satisfy Moscow. Having repeated much that had been said at the 22nd Congress, he went out of his way to accuse the Albanian leaders of opposing the Bulgarian Communist Party's proposals for the strengthening of peace and good-neighborly relations in the Balkans. But what seemed to worry him most was that the Albanian leaders had relegated a bust of Georgi Dimitrov (presented to them by the Bulgarian delegation to the Fourth Congress of the Albanian Workers' Party) to the vegetable garden of a cooperative farm. "That is an unpardonable sacrilege in the list of their many hostile actions against the Bulgarian Communist Party and the People's Republic," declared Zhivkov.[10] He also expressed the hope that the Chinese leaders who had lent a certain amount of support to the men of Tirana "will understand later the anti-Leninist and adventurist course of the Albanian leadership and the harm this is inflicting on the socialist camp." This, in fact, was the only allusion to Communist China in the proceedings, and the press has been very reticent on the subject, although it took up the attack against Albania quite vigorously and reported that a meeting of the Writers' Union condemned the Albanian leadership.

The party leadership made extensive use of the election meetings all over Bulgaria to defend Chervenkov's expulsion and to attack the anti-party group. But in the absence of any party or government changes, they seem to be staying their hand until nearer or after the Eighth Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party to be held next August.

So far, the second de-Stalinization process in Bulgaria has every appearance of being an internal party struggle. It would be difficult for even the most simple-minded to understand why Zhivkov had to travel to the Moscow 22nd Congress to discover what Chervenkov had been doing for the last five years since the denunciation of his personality cult. Nor would they be able to understand why he was appointed Minister of Culture

[7] *Rabotnichesko delo,* November 1, 1961.

[8] Georgi Tshankov (also spelled Chankov) is an anti-Stalinist and has always been identified with the "anti-party group" although perhaps not so closely as others. Reliable but unconfirmed reports in June 1961 said that he was known to be favored by Moscow as a possible substitute for Todor Zhivkov should the latter's position become untenable.

[9] Renewing the attack last year, the party journal *Partien zhivot* (March 1961) said that the "anti-party group" was continuing its "disgusting activity" with Turpeshev and Panov as its chief spokesmen. Kufardjiev (a former trade union official) was accused of gathering around him "evil-spirited . . . fractionists". A similar attack appeared in the May 1961 issue of the journal *Novo vreme.*

[10] Zhivkov's report of Nov. 29, 1961, *loc. cit.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in 1957, less than a year after his disgrace, and why he was reelected to the Politburo by the Seventh Party Congress in June 1958.

Speaking at the 1958 Congress immediately after Comrade Khrushchev (a visitor-delegate), and alluding to his critics, Chervenkov said: "When you are criticized by your enemies, then you may be sure that you are on the right path." [11] In May and June 1961, Chervenkov accompanied Zhivkov to public meetings that were convened to discuss industrial and agricultural shortcomings and to unmask the evil doings of the so-called "anti-party group." Only last year he was appointed Chairman of the State Atomic Power Commission. His 60th birthday in 1960 was celebrated as a solemn occasion at a public gathering in the National Theatre in Sofia, where he received the greetings of the entire Central Committee and Ministerial Council. And only three months before the decision to expel him from the Politburo, Chervenkov was awarded a party decoration and highly praised by Zhivkov himself. There can be no doubt that in the end he was made the scapegoat and that his humiliation makes little political sense, except as a justification of the present regime.

[11] *Rabotnichesko delo,* June 10, 1958.

Rumania: Don't Rock the Boat!

By G. M. Razi

> *This state of affairs is intolerable! How long must we be without our own bankrupts? . . . England has its bankrupts, France has its bankrupts, even Austria has its bankrupts; every nation, every people, every country has its bankrupts. Must we be the only ones without bankrupts of our own?*
>
> **Caragiale, *A Lost Letter*, Act III, Scene 4.**

ON THE EVE of the opening of the 22nd CPSU Congress in Moscow, Gheorge Gheorghiu-Dej, First Secretary of the Rumanian Workers' Party and head of the Rumanian delegation, laid a wreath at the Lenin-Stalin Mausoleum in Red Square. The inscription read: "To the brilliant teacher of the world Communist movement, V. I. Lenin, and to his disciple, J. V. Stalin, from the delegation of the RWP to the 22nd Congress of the CPSU." [1] The next morning, Nikita Khrushchev opened his attack on the crimes (hitherto known as "mistakes" and "distortions") of the Stalin era, and that same day the Rumanian delegation rushed with another wreath to the recently unveiled statue of Karl Marx.

With the speeches of A. N. Shelepin, chairman of the KGB, and the other speakers who followed him to the rostrum, the indictment against Stalin gathered momentum. The climax came with Khrushchev's suggestion that a monument be erected "to perpetuate the memory of comrades who fell victim to arbitrary rule" and the decision of the Congress to remove Stalin's body from the Red Square mausoleum. In the evening of the same day the crypt was closed to the public "for repairs," and the next day Stalin was moved out of the walls.

There are no accounts of Gheorghiu-Dej's reactions to the drama unfolding in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses, but there is little doubt that throughout the grim and startling proceedings his mien appeared as composed as it has always been since the day, towards the end of World War II, when Moscow anointed him as its man in Bucharest. And judging by the calm and smoothness with which the second round of "de-Stalinization" has been carried on in Rumania,

[1] *Scinteia,* Bucharest, Oct. 22, 1961.

Mr. Razi, a member of the District of Columbia Bar, has published numerous articles on international law and East European affairs in both French and American journals.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dej has not lost a minute's sleep since. He has known all along that what he had to do in order to make Moscow forget his *faux pas* in Red Square was to have the Rumanian Workers' Party (RWP) go through the same motions which the CPSU had gone through at the 22nd Congress. As to the success of the performance, he could rely on the years of solid experience the RWP has amassed in imitating its Soviet model.

Gheorgiu-Dej Explains

So, speaking before the RWP Central Committee Plenum, held in Bucharest between November 30 and December 5, 1961, Gheorghiu-Dej expressed his complete agreement with everything that had been said and decided at the Moscow Congress. With respect to the anti-Stalin campaign, he made a special effort to find Rumanian counterparts to the principal protagonists in the Soviet version of the drama. Thus Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari-Georgescu,[2] who had been purged in 1952, were associated with Stalin as the principal culprits guilty of the sins of the personality cult. Iosif Chisinevschi and Miron Constantinescu, who had been stripped of their jobs in 1957,[3] were identified as supporters of the chief culprits, and their expulsion from the party has now been suggested—they appear to be Rumanian stand-ins for the anti-party group of Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich. Finally, a Rumanian "Voroshilov" was found in the person of Constantin Pirvulescu,[4] who was reminded that "to this day [he] failed to analyze his responsibility" for flirting with Chisinevschi and Constantinescu, but no punishment was demanded against him.[5]

Several of the speakers who followed Gheorghiu-Dej indulged in some mild self-criticism,[6] heaping at the same time unrestrained praise on their boss. But the elaboration of the charges against the Pauker-Luca "factionalist group" remained the principal order of business. Thus apart from promoting Stalin's personality cult, Ana Pauker was accused of having ordered the mass arrest of some eighty thousand peasants on unjust charges of "failing to discharge their obligations toward the state," and of having called on the former Fascist Iron Guards to joint the party.[7] And Luca, whom Ana Pauker allegedly considered "a financial expert," but who, according to Dej's story, had been "an old agent of the bourgeois secret police," was charged with having "caused great damage to the national economy" because "he had no idea" of economic and financial problems;[8] for good measure he was also berated for having allegedly opposed, as Finance Minister, the currency reforms of 1947 and 1952.[9]

In their zeal to find support for their charges, the speakers made long incursions into the history of the party, denouncing on this occasion all previous first secretaries of the party (with the exception of Constantin Pirvulescu) as agents of the bourgeois secret police. Besides charging Ana Pauker with embracing

[2] All three were members of the Politbureau until 1952. In addition, Ana Pauker, was CC Secretary and Foreign Minister; Vasile Luca, CC Secretary and Vice-Premier; and Teohari-Georgescu, Minister of the Interior. Only Luca was brought to trial (Oct. 4-8, 1954) after this purge. He was sentenced to death for "having undermined the national economy" and to life imprisonment for "anti-workers activities," but his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Despite the fact that in 1952 the CC had charged Ana Pauker with having encouraged Luca's "treacherous activities" and accused Teohari-Georgescu of having been his accomplice, nothing was said against Pauker and Georgescu during the trial. Pauker is said to have died of cancer in 1960, Georgescu reportedly holds a job as a printer. Pauker's and Luca's purge in 1952 was attributed to Stalin's desire of getting rid of old members of the Komintern. Given the importance of their positions in the RWP it can in any case be assumed that they would not have been purged against Stalin's wish and without his approval.

[3] Before their disgrace in 1957, both Chisinevschi and Constantinescu had been Politbureau members. The former was also a CC Secretary and the latter First Vice-Premier.

[4] Pirvulescu had been Politbureau member, President of the Grand National Assembly, and Chairman of the CC Control Commission. He seems to have slipped from favor at the time of the 3rd RWP Congress in June 1960 when he failed to be re-elected to the Politbureau and was appointed instead chairman of the party's Central Commission of Revision. Towards the end of World War II, before the Communists seized total power, he also served as First Party Secretary.

[5] Agerpress, No. 286, Dec. 7, 1961 p. 39.

[6] Here are some choice examples: "I must acknowledge that although [I had been] in the party for a [considerable length of] time and therefore more could have been asked from me in helping the party leadership to earlier expose the factionalists, I failed to do so. (Gheorghe Vasilichi, member of the RWP CC, Agerpress, No. 290, Dec. 12, 1961, p. 9).

"Concerning Ana Pauker's activity in Moscow I must show, in a self-critical way, that at the time I did not realize her political and moral countenance, as she had a false aureola." (Valter Roman, Agerpress, No. 291, Dec. 13, 1961, p. 16.)

"I own that although I worked close to Ana Pauker and knew her working methods [and] her approach to [the] cadres, I did not realize at that time the anti-party character of her actions. With time, and especially after their exposure, I understood how harmful the activity of the Pauker-Luca factional group, helped by Teohari-Georgescu, had been for the party. (Ana Toma, Deputy Minister of Commerce and CC member, Agerpress, No. 293, Dec. 15, 1961, p. 16.)

[7] Gheorghiu Dej's report, Agerpress, No. 286, Dec. 7, 1961.

[8] Gheorghe Vasilichi, Agerpress No. 290, Dec. 12, 1961.

[9] Gaston Marin, Chairman of the State Committee for Planning and CC member, Agerpress, No. 291, Dec. 13, 1961.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the cult of Stalin's personality, they accused her also of having tried to promote her own personality cult by playing the "heroine" and claiming "in a bragging and ridiculous way that 'wherever Ana was, the working class, the people, too were there'." [10] Several speakers implied in fact that Ana Pauker had started building her own personality cult as early as 1934. She had presumably done so with the aid of her bourgeois connections ("a close relative of hers being one of the proprietors of the newspapers *Adevarul* and *Dimineata*") and of Marcel Pauker ("born with a silver spoon in his mouth into a banker's family," [11] "a political adventurer and one of the leaders of the factional fights in 1929-30, which led the party one step short of liquidation").[12]

As for Luca, he was presented as "conceited, self-important, and ambitious," "characterized by an uncommon brutality," and harboring a "tremendous hatred for those comrades who did not agree with the instructions he issued, whom he insulted, terrorized and threatened, trying to impose forcibly his point of view").[13] Chişinevschi was repeatedly portrayed as "a man of mediocre abilities, good only at intrigues and unable to assert himself by his own qualities," who has always tried to succeed by "clinging to the coats of others, by flattering them." [14] Miron Constantinescu was accused of being "an unscrupulous, careerist longing to rise at any cost and by any means." [15]

BEHIND ALL THIS laborious argument and invective was, of course, Gheorghiu-Dej's desire to disembarrass himself of all responsibility for the Stalinist crimes perpetrated in Rumania. He tried to convince the country that despite his position as First Secretary of the party, the slavish devotion to Stalin in Rumania had been none of his fault because in the years 1948-1952 the actual leadership of the party had been in the hands of the "emigrant" (Pauker-Luca) group, supported by the dogmatic elements in the Soviet party, particularly Molotov![16] To add credence to this tale, the speakers at the CC Plenum praised Gheorghiu-Dej for having saved the party cadres "in these difficult circumstances." And to prop up his improbable defense further, Dej felt obliged to say that, after all, the reverence in which the Rumanian Communists had held Stalin was only natural:

Educated in the spirit of affection for the Soviet Union, for the CPSU, the vanguard of the international Communist and working-class movement, the Communists of our country, as of other countries, linked the great successes obtained by the Soviet Union in the building of socialism with the name of Stalin who, as is known, had important merits in his activity as the leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Soviet state, as well as an outstanding leader of the international Communist movement. That is why, before the negative features of his activity became known, he enjoyed great prestige in the ranks of the Communists of all countries including our own.

At the same time, however, Dej sought to minimize the effects of the personality cult in Rumania. "It must be underlined," he declared, "that the methods generated by the personality cult and by its consequences did not assume with us the proportions they did in other countries." Ingeniously, several speakers came forth with what they obviously thought was eloquent evidence supporting this mendacity. "Our party did not have to rehabilitate anyone post-mortem!" they cried one after another.

The problem of Stalinist idolatry in Rumania was approached by Dej with equal assurance. As if he had never had anything to do with the subject in the past and had become aware of it for the first time in his life, he drew attention "to the need of solving the question of the way certain places, streets, public institutions, enterprises and socialist units of agriculture are named." He then stated the "logical" solutions and procedures:

In the first place, I consider it incorrect that some of them have been named after persons who are alive. . . .[17] In the second place, I would draw attention to the fact that there is no system governing the naming after persons who are no longer alive. . . . It is necessary to proceed to the re-examination of such names, and in the future such names should be given only with the approval of the central bodies.

While no haste was shown in removing the embarrassing names from the hundreds of streets, parks and public institutions, little by little, the "teachings" of the 22nd Congress on this point were implemented. Stalin's name disappeared from *Scinteia's* publishing house, from the V. I. Lenin - J. V. Stalin Museum (rebaptized the Marx-Engels-Lenin Museum), and on

[10] Nicolae Ceausescu, Politbureau member and CC Secretary, Agerpress, No. 291, Dec. 14, 1961.
[11] Gheorghe Stoica, Agerpress, No. 291, Dec. 13, 1961.
[12] Ceausescu, *loc. cit.*
[13] Vasilichi, *loc. cit.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Ceausescu, *loc. cit.*
[16] See also Gaston Marin, *loc. cit.*

[17] Among those most affected will be Gheorghiu-Dej, Mao-Tse-Tung, Molotov, Voroshilov, and Malinovski. By a decree of the State Council (March 17, 1962) the name of the Gheorghiu-Dej district of Bucharest has already been changed to "February 16", the day of the Grivitza strike led by Gheorgiu-Dej in 1933.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the night of March 12, screened behind a cloth-covered scaffolding, a demolition team began to take down Stalin's grandiose statue at the entrance to the Stalin Park of Culture and Rest in Bucharest. By March 14 the statue was gone, the event having passed unmentioned by the press.

The next day, however, the State Council and the Executive Committee of the Bucharest People's Council published decrees announcing that streets, squares and parks in the Rumanian capital would no longer bear Stalin's name. Thus, to mention the most notable changes, the Stalin Park of Culture and Rest has become Herastrau Park of Culture and Rest (named after the lake located in the park), and Stalin Boulevard and Stalin Square (Piatza Stalin) were rebaptized "Aviatorilor" (after the nearby monument to World War I fliers). The party is taking no chances this time.

"De-Stalinization" Accomplished

With these ritual gestures completed—Stalin's name and likeness removed from the face of the land and domestic scapegoats identified and condemned—the process of de-Stalinization can safely be considered closed in Rumania. Apart from Ulbricht's SED in East Germany, Gheorghiu-Dej's RWP is undoubtedly the most hated Communist party in the world. Without any desire—or hope—of ingratiating itself with the people, and without any need to placate dissenting voices within the party, the present leadership of the RWP has no intention of pushing Khrushchev's campaign beyond the formalities just described.

Now, just as in 1956, the Rumanian regime views Moscow's challenge to Stalinism as transient folly. After the 20th Congress, in deference to Khrushchev, it had instituted a few token measures of de-Stalinization—such as restoring to the city of Stalin its ancient name of Brasov—but the October Revolution in neighboring Hungary reinforced its conviction that it could not dispense with police rule, forced collectivization of agriculture, and strict control over intellectual life.

This determination to stick to the conservative path was well exemplified during the National Conference of the Writers' Union held in Bucharest between January 22 and 28 of this year. The party used the occasion to reaffirm in the strongest possible terms what have come to be known as Stalinist principles in art and literature: total devotion to "socialist realism" and complete submission to the guidance of the party.[18] Even the formal aspects of the oratory at the conference showed that the "cultural" fashions remain what they were before "de-Stalinization." Here, for instance, is how the octogenarian T. Arghezi, the greatest living Rumanian poet, who several years ago gave his allegiance to the regime, eulogized the party's leadership and its First Secretary:

Long live the new founders of our country! They have been given the rare and happy destiny of outliving their grandiose feat as founders of a new world and of a new life, and to live it amongst us. A deep bow—I beg him to forgive me—to our dear Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej! Praise to them, gratitude to them, glory to them! [19]

The First Secretary, one may suspect, forgave.

On "De-Stalinizing" Literature

Animated by the call of the Third Congress of the RAWP to produce works commensurate with the high artistic and ideological demands of the party and people, men of letters have mobilized their creative powers in order to respond honorably to the expectations of today's millions of readers. . . . At this historic stage of development of our society, the great responsibility of literature is to help, with all its influential force, the formation and development of the socialist conscience, the creation of the new man, and socialist morality . . ., the elimination of the influences of bourgeois ideology and education from the conscience of the people. Literary creation has the mission to reflect the powerful surge of the building of the socialist economy and culture . . ., to depict the luminous portrait of the worker, of the collectivist peasant. . . . The principles of socialist realism are the sure guide of our writers. . . . Subjectivism, the apologetic tone, the non-constructive negativist position, and cliquishness do not help the development of literature. Our literature needs . . . criticism imbued with the party spirit. . . .

—Gheorghiu-Dej, speaking before the Rumanian Writers' Union, Scinteia, Jan. 25, 1962.

[18] See the report of the steering committee of the Writers' Union presented by Mihai Beniuc. Another speaker, Titus Popovici, delivered himself on the same occasion of the following encomium: "At a time when revisionism was launching its perfidious attacks, the guidance of the party . . . protected our writers from slipping into the swamps of nihilism . . ., from the gropings, sometimes tragic, for which elsewhere a heavy and painful tribute had to be paid. The Leninist wisdom and firmness of our party, of its CC headed by Comrade Gheorghiu-Dej, protected the literary front during Stalin's personality cult." *Scinteia*, January 26, 1962.

[19] *Scinteia*, Jan. 29, 1962.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Czechoslovakia: The Past Reburied

By Ivo Duchacek

STALIN'S STATUE on Letna Hill in Prague is the largest memorial to the Soviet dictator built anywhere in the world. Even after his 1956 degradation, the tyrant, transmogrified in 18,000 tons of stone, has continued to hover over the capital city.

Now, at last, he is to go. In obeisance to the verdict of the 22nd CPSU Congress, the Prague regime has appointed a special commission which is to recommend a safe and tactful means of dismantling the gigantic monument.[1] The impressive make-up of the wrecking directorate reflects the trepidation with which the Czechoslovak party approaches this delicate task. The group is headed by Jiri Hendrych, a powerful Secretary of the Central Committee, and among its members, many of whom have long enjoyed solid Stalinist reputations, are Cabinet ministers, the Mayor of Prague, the Rector of Charles University, Communist architects and sculptors, and, intriguingly enough, also Professor B. Spacek, Director of the Institute for Experimental and Clinical Surgery at Charles University.[2]

The official rationale for the removal of the statue was given by President and First Party Secretary Antonin Novotny shortly after his return from the 22nd CPSU Congress in Moscow. Speaking on November 17 before the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz), he declared:

Stalin's monument is an homage of sorts that was paid the personality cult. Its magalomania and pompousness, and above all, its main figure, are now in conflict with the warmth, sincerity and purity which characterize the feelings between our and the Soviet peoples. It is in conflict with the political conviction of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia which even before [!] the 20th CPSU Congress opposed the cult of personality and its consequences. The statue conflicts with our estimate of Stalin's role. And to tell the truth, it also conflicts with the traditions of our people and the beauty of Prague. . . . The attitude of our party in this matter is honorable and Leninist and has *nothing in common with the petty-bourgeois hysteria of some* individuals or with the sarcastic suggestions of foreign bourgeois propaganda.[3]

Why the monstrous statue had been erected in the first place and maintained against the better judgment of the Czechoslovak party, as Novotny implied, was not explained.

Similarly, the regime has decided to remove the name of Stalin, and also that of Molotov and the other members of the "anti-party" group, from all public view. As a result, city boroughs, public squares, parks and streets bearing their names are being discreetly renamed.

The Case of Klement Gottwald

The "de-Stalinization" parade did not stop here, however. To stay in step with Moscow the Czechoslovak Communist leaders thought it necessary to find a domestic "Stalin" and expose him to public opprobrium. For reasons explained later they decided—in fine imitation of the posthumous 1961 disgrace of Joseph Stalin—to lift the mummified corpse of the first Communist President of Czechoslovakia, Klement Gottwald, from his glass-topped coffin in the Vitkov Hill mausoleum and rebury him "in a manner consistent with the Leninist understanding of the role of the personality and collective leadership."[4] Thus even in death, as

[1] A British firm, British Monumental Repairers of Chancery Lane, London, has offered to dismantle carefully the Prague Stalin by using low-yield explosives, in order "to keep him in chunks," which then would be shipped by barge and boat to England, to be used there "for finishing bathroom interiors." Reported in the London *Observer* and *Newsweek* (New York, January 16, 1962).

[2] *Rude pravo* (Prague), January 12, 1962.

[3] *Ibid.*, November 21, 1961.

[4] Premier Viliam Siroky, quoted in *Rude pravo*, November 24, 1961.

Professor Duchacek, who teaches Government at the City College of New York, has written extensively on Czechoslovak affairs.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was his wont in life, Gottwald is bound to follow his Soviet master's macabre moves.

Before the Czechoslovak delegation left Prague to attend the 22nd Soviet Party Congress, it was generally assumed that the main concern of the forthcoming meeting would be the new party program and rules. Until October 17, 1961, the day when the question of further de-Stalinization was reopened at the 22nd Congress, the Czechoslovak leaders lived and ruled under the comforting impression that after Hungary the worst was over and that "de-Stalinization" in Czechoslovakia was a closed chapter.

There is nothing to suggest that the Prague regime anticipated the new revelations about Stalin's rule, or for that matter, any future need to disgrace Gottwald. In fact, elaborate preparations for the commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the late President's birth (November 23) had then been in progress. And, even more important, the new history of the CPCz, published last year, credited him with the successful exposure of the dangers of the personality cult:

The Central Committee, and *above all* Klement Gottwald, had frequently warned against boastful pride and misuse of power, against offenses committed by some Communists entrusted with public office. . . . Violations of Lenist norms of party life were made possible by manifestations of the personality cult in the *international* Communist movement.[5]

In other words, the party seemed to be saying, the abuses of power that had taken place occurred in spite, rather than because of Gottwald.

After their return from Moscow Novotny and his colleagues had first to solve the question whether the second phase of de-Stalinization in Czechoslovakia should be limited to the personality of Stalin or whether a native "Stalin" was to be found and disgraced. Theoretically, it would have been possible perhaps to condemn as Stalinists those who had sent eleven top leaders of the Czechoslovak Party, including its Secretary General, Rudolf Slansky, and Foreign Minister Vlado Clementis, to the gallows in 1952. With its anti-Tito sallies, antisemitic overtones, and incredible fabrications and confessions, this trial was indeed the most blatant example of the worst aspects of Stalinism. Rehabilitating its victims, however, would have implicated practically all the present Communist leaders, and it was no doubt for this reason that President Novotny categorically rejected any reconsideration of the 1952 trial:

We shall absolutely refuse to permit anybody to misuse matters, which have been solved long ago, for demagogical attacks against the party. The irresponsible demand that those who were found guilty of gross violations of socialist legality during the Slansky era should now be rehabilitated is hereby rejected as totally unfounded.[6]

Thus the verdict of the Slansky Trial, which had already been confirmed, under similar circumstances, in 1956, received its second seal of approval.[7]

The search for domestic scapegoats then led directly to the dead Gottwald. In him the Prague regime found a figure who, like Stalin, could be said to have had his days of merit and glory, but who could also be accused of having been contaminated in his closing years by the virus of his own personality cult.

Gottwald was officially cut to size at a meeting of the Central Committee held on November 17, 1961, after the Czechoslovak delegation's return from Moscow. Antonin Novotny began by asking how it was possible that Gottwald, who had given the party its Leninist orientation in the 1930's, later failed to prevent and even supported un-Leninist forms of party life. He then offered to answer the riddle, even though, as he pointedly declared, "I myself was not a member of the party's leadership at that time."[8]

According to Novotny, up to and including the Communist coup d'état of 1948 the one-time leader of Czechoslovak communism behaved in an admirable manner. Indeed, "the victory of the working masses over reaction in February 1948," he declared, "will forever be connected with the name of Comrade Gottwald." This, then, was Gottwald's "Leninist" period. But then came the deterioration. After his 1948 triumph and elevation to the presidency, Gottwald lost "knowledge of contemporary life, he ceased to know the pulse of the life of our party and our people." Solicitously, Novotny offered explanations for Gottwald's errors: The transfer of his activities to the presidential resi-

[5] *Dejiny KSČ* (History of the CPCz), Prague, 1961, p. 570. (Italics added.)

[6] *Rude pravo,* November 21, 1961.

[7] The trial had been slightly retouched in 1956 in only one respect. In deference to Khrushchev's attempts of the time to achieve a reconciliation with Tito, all the anti-Yugoslav allegations made during the trial were branded as fabrications produced by Lavrenti Beria and his Czechoslovak "agent," Rudolf Slansky, who, for good measure, was then also accused of having been the principal Stalinist in the country. A special commission appointed at the same time to review under the chairmanship of the then Minister of Interior, Rudolf Barak (purged in February of this year), the 150,000 pages of documentary material, never produced a report. (See *Rude pravo,* June 11, 1956.) Curiously enough, however, the Communist leaders who had been tried with Slansky but escaped with prison terms, were later set free and partly even rehabilitated. Among them is Bohuslav Lastovicka, the former Deputy Minister of Defense, who now is again a member of the Central Committee.

[8] *Rude pravo,* November 21, 1962.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dence at Hradčany allowed Beria's agent, Slansky, to build around Gottwald an "aura of inaccessibility," which allowed the former to direct, undisturbed, his anti-party activities from the party headquarters; following his heart attack in the Soviet Union in 1943, Gottwald's health began to fail rapidly, particularly after 1948; and when "the party" unmasked Slansky, Gottwald, who had held the former in exaggerated trust, was seized with deep depressions.

By thus mixing glorification [9] with condemnation tempered by fake compassion, the Prague regime has attempted to avoid destroying completely the most important figure in Czechoslovak Communist history and seriously undermining the self-confidence of the party cadres. But the formula has failed to work. Throughout the country the party is being assailed by unbridled sarcasm and within the party councils there is much embarrassment and even argument. Such, in fact, has been the confusion, that in February of this year, three months after Novotny's November speech, the Central Committee had to return to the Gottwald case once again. "With the exception of a few individuals," the report on the session claimed half-heartedly, "the meaning of the reburial of Klement Gottwald is now understood." [10] Understood or not, Gottwald remained in his glass coffin until the 1st of April, and in the meantime, the regime's attention and the people's curiosity turned to the more intriguing affair of the still living Rudolf Barak.

The Case of Rudolf Barak

Late last February it was announced that Barak, a former Minister of the Interior, was dropped from the Politburo and the Central Committee, expelled from the party, deprived of his office of Vice-Premier, stripped of parliamentary immunity, and charged with criminal activities which would be further investigated. "As things develop," said First Secretary and President Novotny, in a speech before the Central Committee, **it is a much more important affair than we had first thought. It is a matter which is connected with personal goals. Barak hoped to achieve them by anti-party activities and by creating mistrust toward the party and government. . . . The investigation continues and it shows that Barak is a political adventurer with high career goals. It also demonstrates that he was a thief who had appropriated state funds for himself.**[11]

A special report of the Prosecutor General's Office made public towards the end of March stressed further the criminal coloring of the accusation against Barak and emphasized his personal ambitions:

Results of the investigation reveal that Rudolf Barak, while exercising the functions of Minister of the Interior, had craftily drained for his own purposes considerable funds designated for use in accomplishing important tasks by the Ministry of the Interior. . . .

In these punishable acts Rudolf Barak was abetted by his personal secretary, Vlastimil Jenyš and several of his closest aides. Barak and all others accused have been confessing their guilt under the weight of the evidence submitted.

Barak made an ostentatious display of his functions and pretended a devotion to the cause of socialism. To publicize himself, he revealed information on a number of important measures of a political and internal nature. All his activities were motivated by an adventurous megalomania and desire for an easy life. They demonstrate the shortcomings of his character and petty-bourgeois mentality. Documents were found during the investigation which demonstrate that his goal was a personal career.[12]

Two odd and contradictory foreign Communist comments are worth noting in this connection. In spite of the currently strained relations between Albania and Czechoslovakia, the Albanian party's central organ, *Zeri i popullit,* acclaimed the Czechoslovak Communists for unmasking Barak who, according to the paper, was not only a thief but was also "ready to conduct espionage for imperialism, to sell state security secrets, and to betray the interests of the people," [13] What is more, the Tirana report announced that Barak had been engaged in feverish activities against the Albanians alongside with the "professional Soviet provocateur and Khrushchev's faithful spokesman, Andropov." [14] The Yugoslav *Borba,* on the other hand, took a different tack. It admitted that the charges against Barak were unclear, but added that he had been known for not

[9] On November 22, the eve of Gottwald's 65th birthday, a ceremony was held on Vitkov Hill to commemorate Gottwald's life and work. Among the participants were Premier Siroky who one week before had argued for the removal of Gottwald's body from his mausoleum, and Deputy Premiers Rudolf Barak and Jaromir Dolansky. On November 23, a new statue of Gottwald was unveiled at Gottwaldov (former Zlin). Vice-Premier Dolansky there addressed a crowd of 50,000 people, praising Gottwald's achievements and excusing his later errors. And on December 2, the Bratislava labor union daily *Praca* announced that another Gottwald monument would be placed on a public square in Bratislava in 1962.

[10] *Rude pravo,* February 9, 1962.

[11] *Ibid.,* February 23, 1962. According to Radio Prague's version of Novotny's speech, Barak also "aimed at the seizure of political power." This was deleted from the text of Novotny's speech as reproduced in the press. On the other hand, the direct broadcast did not contain Novotny's allusion to Barak's thievery.

[12] ČTK, March 24, 1962.

[13] *Zeri i popullit* (Tirana), February 16, 1962.

[14] Chief of the CPSU Central Committee section for liaison with block Communist parties.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

being an ardent supporter of the present Soviet leadership and the 22nd CPSU Congress.[15]

Thus far only one thing can be said with certainty about the Barak affair: the forthcoming trial* will be of considerable importance to the Communist leaders now in power in Prague, even though the exact purpose and ramifications of the case remain unclear. The political star of Rudolf Barak had risen almost as rapidly as it crashed. A former Social Democrat, he joined the party only in 1945. In 1953, after Stalin's death, he was appointed Minister of the Interior, and remained in that post throughout the period of the thaw until June 1961. He has been associated therefore with certain measures of clemency, partial liberalization, and public criticism of the former Stalinist methods of the Czechoslovak secret police. He seems to have had some genuine following within the party and even a degree of wider popular appeal—something no other Communist leader has been able to claim of late. His falling out with the Novotny-Hendrych leadership seems to date back to last year when he was removed from the Interior Ministry.

From all the evidence available so far, the purge of Barak appears to be a byproduct of a power struggle in the Czechoslovak party hierarchy; more specifically perhaps, a defensive move by the lack-luster, unpopular Novotny, supported by the ambitious Central Committee Secretary Hendrych, against a rival relatively untainted by a Stalinist past, who had acquired a dangerous measure of political following as well as detailed knowledge of incriminating information against virtually every member of the present leadership. (It should be remembered that as Interior Minister Barak was in 1956 chairman of a special commission which reviewed—without ever publishing a report—the proceedings that led to the Slansky Trial bloodbath.)

[15] *Borba* (Belgrade), February 9, 1962.

* On April 20—after this issue had gone to press—it was announced that Barak was tried before the High Military Court in Prague and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. He was said to have been convicted of stealing foreign and Czechoslovak currency from state funds while he was Minister of the Interior, to buy consumer goods in capitalist countries, finance recreation trips abroad for his family, and buy "various works of art, particularly pictures." "The court proceedings proved beyond doubt," the announcement continued—and herein seems to lie the real political explanation of the trial—"that R. Barak was a greedy man, a plotter, and a political adventurer . . . [that] he ostentatiously popularized his person, stressed his alleged merit, and simulated his devotion to socialism." The former party leader reportedly admitted his guilt and failed to plead any mitigating circumstances. Three co-defendants, all former Interior Ministry officials, were sentenced to prison terms of 10 years, 3 years, and 10 months respectively. For details see *Rude pravo,* April 21, 1962.—*Ed.*

It is very likely that Novotny and his colleagues will now attempt to make use of the Barak case in their sham campaign against the cult of personality, but if they do convict Barak of this charge, they will have to explain how it was that even with Stalin gone and Slansky and Gottwald dead, the Czechoslovak party continued spawning criminal leaders.

Response to the Rituals

The Czechoslovak Communist Party has joined Khrushchev's second de-Stalinization campaign with serious misgivings, and for good reason. The bulk of its present leaders had been in leading positions during Stalin's life and served him without fault. Now that they have been asked to join once again in the dead tyrant's degradation—and felt obliged to find a new domestic scapegoat in the person of Klement Gottwald—they run the serious risk of undermining the authority of the party and exposing themselves to devastating public scrutiny. They have moved therefore very slowly and with much equivocation, and they have limited themselves to purely symbolic gestures which have failed to affect the substance of the country's political life. They have even postponed until October 1962 the convening of the 12th CPCz Congress, hoping undoubtedly, that by that time they will have counteracted the disruptive effects of the de-Stalinization campaign and overcome "some difficulties which developed during the past year." [16]

The memory of the token de-Stalinization of 1956, which had almost slipped out of the control of the party leaders, is surely contributing to their concern. Some groups at that time, especially writers and students, interpreted the regime's mere scratching of the Stalinist surface [17] with unwarranted optimism, and for a moment they pushed the government much farther than it had intended to go. Although shaken at first by these manifestations at home, and particularly by the subsequent rebellions in Poland and Hungary, the party eventually succeeded in reconsolidating its firm hold over the country. This was largely due, however, to the armed Soviet intervention in Hungary which reassured the Prague regime about the efficacy and permanancy of the Soviet protective umbrella over East Central Europe. Once again it had been made manifest to both the leaders and their subjects that the

[16] *Rude pravo,* January 7, 1962.

[17] Only one of the leading Czech Communists was purged in 1956 for alleged indulgence in the personality cult. It was Alexej Cepicka, the highly unpopular former Minister of Defense and son-in-law of the late Gottwald.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government's close association with Soviet might was an effective guarantee of the maintenance of local Communist power.

This deep sense of dependence by the Prague regime on Soviet political and military support—augmented by the current dependence of the Czechoslovak economy on Soviet raw materials supplies, and the widespread assumption of an identity of Czech and Soviet interests with regard to Germany—explains also the Czechoslovak leaders' zealous support of the external policy lines adopted by the 22nd CPSU Congress. Indeed, it is only in this sphere—whether with respect to the Albanian dispute or the broader issues raised by the Sino-Soviet controversy—that the Czechoslovak party follows Khrushchev's initiatives sincerely and almost automatically. In the wake of the Congress, Prague hastened to reassert its opposition to polycentrist tendencies within the bloc[18] and specifically criticized the position adopted by the Chinese in Moscow.[19] The tone of the Czechoslovak press towards Albania has become quite violent, even though the Czechoslovak Embassy in Tirana, headed by a chargé d'affaires, continues to function, representing at present also Soviet interests in the country.[20] It is unlikely that the case of primitive Albania or the geographically and racially remote China, with her revolutionary radicalism and adventurist foreign policy, could at any time in the foreseeable future appeal to the practical men in Prague who rule over an industrialized country endowed with the highest standard of living in the Communist world.

The bitter lesson of Hungary and its aftermath in Czechoslovakia has not been forgotten by the population either. This is why, in contrast to the high optimism of 1956, the reaction to the 1961 de-Stalinization campaign has been marked by sarcasm and little hope for political change. Characteristically, the response of the intellectuals has remained limited to a few anguished questions posed in the party-controlled press. "Is it possible," wrote a Slovak Communist writer, Ladislav Mnačko, "to prevent a phenomenon such as the personality cult from occurring again? Is it at all within the power and possibilities of our society? . . . . Where are the effective guarantees of a system of public control that would make the repetition of past errors impossible? Do they exist at all?" [21]

Mnačko did not know the answer, and the regime, by arresting Barak, hardly helped him out. The frivolous and sordid motions of dismantling monuments, degrading past leaders and renaming public squares no longer satisfies anybody, and least of all the younger Communist intellectuals. They want safeguards against *future* infractions of law and humanity. One of them, Pavel Vranovsky, put it succinctly late last year:

Yes, it is necessary to eliminate the outward signs of the personality cult . . . but we shall not get rid of . . . [it] simply by destroying monuments and changing the names of streets and enterprises. . . . We must do something not only about the appearance, but also about the substance . . . that is about the whole system of anti-Leninist principles, haughtiness and pushing people around, suspiciousness, the lack of respect for human life, the violation of civil rights. . . .[22]

Doubts and demands such as these, modest as they may be in tone today, may well grow as time goes on and eventually force the regime to come forth with answers better than the hesitant shifts in official idolatry that have marked its behavior thus far.

[18] "The concept of polycentrism according to which there should be more than one revolutionary center of our movement . . . would not serve well our common struggle against world imperialism and for the victory of communism." Jan Fojtik in *Rude pravo,* December 12, 1961.

[19] Said Antonin Novotny, addressing the CC of the CPCz: "We cannot agree with the reservations voiced by Comrade Chou En-lai in the name of the Chinese party concerning the position of the CC of the CPSU with regard to the leadership of the Workers' Party of Albania. We fully support the position of our Soviet comrades, a position which subsequent events have confirmed." *Rude pravo,* November 21, 1961.

[20] "No capitalist country," recently wrote *Rude pravo* (December 15, 1961), "has ever treated Czechoslovak diplomats so callously as has Albania who allegedly desires to remain faithful to the bonds of friendship and alliance with socialist countries."

[21] *Kulturny zivot* (Bratislava), November 4, 1961.

[22] *Rude pravo,* November 22, 1961.

Conversation in the Countryside

A: "And how is Grandma these days?"
B: "Dead more than a year, don't you remember?"
A: "So, there's really nothing new with her?"
B: "Still in the same graveyard."
A: "Oh, I see."

—*Zemedelske noviny* (Prague), Jan. 7, 1962.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hungary: Pressures from Above

By Paul Landy

WHILE THE 22ND CPSU CONGRESS has had a pronounced and extremely complex impact on the political scene in Hungary, the repercussions have been totally different from those of the 20th Congress which sowed the seeds of the October 1956 revolt. Unlike the first de-Stalinization unleashed by Khrushchev's "secret" speech at that earlier Congress, the second initiated by the 22nd Congress has not shaken the Hungarian ruling party, much less the masses. In the first place, this is because some of the essential factors which combined five years ago to bring about the attempt at violent overthrow of Communist party rule—notably, factionalism in the top leadership, organized inner-party opposition, and pent-up popular discontent—are conspicuously absent in Hungary at the present time. It is also due to the fact that the response of the present Hungarian leadership to the 22nd Congress differs in two important respects from the reaction of the old Rakosist leadership to the first de-Stalinization.

Ever since the Congress, Janos Kadar and his associates have been making great efforts to keep the new de-Stalinization campaign within definite, politically feasible limits. Whereas in 1956 both Rakosi and Gerö responded to *presures from below* with merely verbal and bewildering policy twists and turns, the Kadar leadership has so far managed to keep the discipline and morale of the party apparatus intact through prompt and unequivocal *guidance from above*. Then, too, in contrast to the guilt-ridden inaction of the old Stalinist leadership after Khrushchev's secret speech of February 1956, the present Hungarian party leaders have pledged genuine and unqualified support of the resolutions of the 22nd Congress because they recognize that their own political course and fortunes are indissolubly linked with the anti-Stalinist line and political ascendancy of Khrushchev.

Post-Congress Watchword: Continuity

The Hungarian party leadership has more than once publicly avowed its commitment to the Khrushchev line. Addressing parliament on the eve of the 22nd Congress, Kadar underlined this point by stating: "It is said from time to time that this or that change [in Hungary] means that the friends of Khrushchev have again gained ground. I must say that we are proud of being regarded as friends by Khrushchev and his comrades-in-arms, the leaders of the CPSU." [1] He reiterated it even more unequivocally later when he hailed the confirmation of Khrushchev's policies by the Congress as giving long-term sanction for the continuation of the Hungarian leadership's middle-of-the-road course:

What I would like to say after the 22nd Congress is that our political line will remain stabilized over a very long period. Because of this, one can not only live and work unperturbed, but also study how to carry out this policy even better.[2]

This self-confident and essentially pragmatic Hungarian response to the Congress resolutions appears in large part to reflect a sense of relief among the party leaders at the thought that some of the most explosive problems of de-Stalinization—problems which their uneasy colleagues in Prague or Sofia have yet to face up to—have already been resolved in Hungary. Accordingly, both the resolution adopted by

---

Mr. Landy, Central and East European correspondent for the Financial Times *(London), last appeared in these pages with "Reforms in Yugoslavia" (November-December 1961).*

[1] *Nepszabadsag,* October 13, 1961.

[2] *Ibid.,* December 3, 1961. See also *Nepszabadsag* editorial of October 24, 1961, stressing the dangers which would have faced the Hungarian party leadership if the Soviet "anti-party group" had triumphed in 1957.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Central Committee last November [3] and subsequent speeches by Kadar and other leading spokesmen have emphasized the continuity of the party's already established political line. *Nepszabadsag*, the central party organ, thus stated:

The HSWP [Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party] has already done away with the cult of personality. The Leninist norms of party life and the principle of collective leadership are in force. The contact between the party and the masses is strong and intimate. The party is exercising its leading role in every field of national life and is thereby guaranteeing, among other things, the enforcement of socialist legality and the order built on the constitution and laws of our country. The political line of our party has been justified and proven correct. Thus the party has no reason to change its policy.[4]

The same theme was echoed more recently in a statement by Istvan Szirmai, one of the secretaries of the Central Committee, emphasizing that "our political line is stable and will not change."[5]

Nevertheless, there is ample evidence to suggest that what Kadar has termed the "creative application of the lessons of the [22nd] Congress to the peculiar national conditions" [6] of Hungary has already had a significant impact on the approach being taken by the present leadership to its two basic political dilemmas in the post-Congress period. These are: first, how to reform the party bureaucracy and instill a new "sense of mission" in the party as a whole without rekindling the embers of revisionist heresy and evoking the ghost of Imre Nagy; second, how to readjust the party's relations with the non-Communist masses so as to bridge the yawning gap between them and the regime without diluting the inner cohesion of the party and weakening its monopoly of power.

Reaction in the Ranks

To understand the implications of these tasks, one must view them in the context of the prevailing psychological climate in the lower and medium echelons of the party hierarchy. Specifically, while the party *as a whole* has not been shaken by the developments at the 22nd Congress, available evidence suggests that the total public repudiation of Stalin still came as a shock to quite a few old-time party members and functionaries. Above all, it is the Congress' open indictment of the repressions of the Stalin era that has given rise to impassioned discussions at party meetings and lectures and in private conversations. A typical report in one of the provincial newspapers describes reactions in party circles in these words:

Some people, although agreeing with all the points of the Congress resolution, nevertheless have 'reservations' about the condemnation of the personality cult of Stalin. Many are of the opinion that it was unnecessary to speak so frankly about the mistakes and shortcomings. Their argument is that this will only gladden our enemies.[7]

Tarsadalmi Zemle (December 1961) acknowledged that others in the party were more profoundly affected by the indictment of Stalin, which "had shaken their innermost feelings and the moral bases of their convictions." *Nepszabadsag* reported two instances in which party members had questioned not merely the form but the very essence of the indictment against Stalin. The paper gave the gist of their arguments as follows:

It is both easy and unjust to criticize today the mistakes made during the Stalin era. The methods that are now so sharply condemned were the direct result of the conditions of that historic period. . . . It is impossible, on the basis of postwar conditions, to make a realistic appraisal of Stalin's mistakes, which at the time were perhaps not mistakes at all.[8]

The party leadership has of course lost no time in rebuking these "dogmatist" and "sectarian" critics of the Congress, accusing them of abetting, whether wittingly or not, the cause of the "revisionists, right-wing socialists, and imperialist enemies," who seek to identify the cult of personality with the system itself. The official position, widely publicized in the party press, has been that the massive attack on Stalin and the bringing out into the open of the "bitter truth" about his misdeeds were necessary to clear away the relics of Stalinism, to release the initiative of the masses, and last but not least, to provide a guarantee against a return to repressive policies. [9]

In their post-Congress statements, Kadar and his associates have prudently avoided any attempt at analyzing the socio-political roots of the Stalinist terror, preferring to dismiss it as an "alien growth on the Soviet body politic." The whole public treatment of de-Stalinization in Hungary has indeed been pragmatic

[3] *Ibid.*, November 19, 1961.
[4] *Ibid.*, November 21, 1961.
[5] *Ibid.*, March 4, 1962.
[6] From a speech before the Council of the Patriotic People's Front (*ibid.*, December 3, 1961).
[7] *Kisalföld* (Gyor), January 6, 1962.
[8] *Nepszabadsag*, January 20, 1962. For reports of similar reactions, see *ibid.*, January 14 and February 2, 1962; also *Somogyi Neplap*, January 5, 1962.
[9] E.g., see speech by Szirmai, reprinted in *Tarsadalmi Zemle*, March 1962; also statements in *ibid.*, February 1962, and *Nepszabadsag*, December 3 and 31, 1961.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and at the same time emotional. Apparently acting under central party instructions, the newspapers have outdone even the Polish press in reprinting either the full text or lengthy portions of every single article published in a major Soviet periodical concerning long-unmentioned victims of the Stalinist terror. Moreover, in contrast to the uneasy silence hitherto maintained regarding the pre-1956 show trials, executions, and imprisonments in Hungary itself, *Nepszabadsag* has recently given prominence to stories about survivors of the Rakosi terror who have remained loyal Communists. Perhaps to emphasize the healing of wounds inflicted in the crushing of the October 1956 rising, the same newspaper also published an interview with a former "student counterrevolutionary" who, in spite of two and a half years in prison, has since become an enthusiastic supporter of the Kadar regime.[10]

"Left Dogmatists" Under Fire

However, the chief significance of the 22nd Congress for Hungary lies in the powerful impetus it has given to Kadar's campaign to revitalize the party and improve its relations with the masses. This has already brought a noticeable shift of emphasis in the regime's two-front battle against revisionism and dogmatism. For the first time since November 1956, the party leadership is directing its heaviest fire against the "leftist dogmatists." Thus, the Central Committee resolution of last November stated:

Those who previously were prisoners of sectarian thinking and have not yet been able to break completely with such views and the methods stemming from them will have to rid themselves . . . even of the shadow of those mistakes. . . . We have to liquidate the still persisting tendency to regard immeasurably harmful leftism as a forgivable and tolerable mistake.[11]

In the recent new elections to primary party organizations throughout the country, the leadership has already had an opportunity to translate these words into practice. The elections resulted in a substantial turnover of personnel mainly at the lower and intermediate levels of the party apparatus, about one-fifth of the secretaries and one-third of the members of local party committees being replaced. As there are some 18,000 primary organizations, these proportions indicate that the turnover affected some 3,600 local party secretaries and (on the basis of five-member committees) about 30,000 committee members.[12] Quantitatively speaking, these levels of "renewal" were not much higher than the turnover in the 1959 party elections, but many of the changes were clearly influenced by the concentrated campaign against "dogmatic" as well as inefficient and corrupt local functionaries.

There have also been some significant changes of personnel in the higher echelons of authority, suggesting that Kadar does not intend to stop halfway in overhauling both the party and state bureaucracies. Paradoxically, the casualties resulting from these changes have fallen mainly among the very functionaries who played a key role in rebuilding the Communist power apparatus during 1957-58. Now that the general political climate has changed and Kadar's power has been consolidated, many of the old-time Communists who owed their influential positions to Rakosi but found themselves obligated, after the 1956 revolt, to support Kadar for want of any better alternative have come to be regarded by the present leadership as an embarrassing ballast to be jettisoned as smoothly as possible. This intention was bluntly expressed by Jozsef Sandor, one of the rising post-1956 members of Kadar's circle, in a published statement last January intimating that all accounts had not yet been settled in the party. According to Sandor:

Anyone who is unable to change and to rid himself of his mistakes had better give up his position to someone more competent. In my opinion, the 22nd Congress sounded the death knell of those functionaries who cannot or do not want to work in a new way.[13]

Actually, in this area, the Congress appears merely to have sanctioned and given added urgency to a trend that already had become manifest in the top-level governmental reorganization carried out last fall. Much more than Kadar's assumption of the presidency of the Council of Ministers in place of the aging Ferenc Münnich, it was the downgrading of Karoly Kiss and the elevation of Bela Biszku and Jenö Fock, both young post-1956 party leaders, to vice-presidencies of the Council which furnished the key to the shake-up—as well as a portent of wider changes yet to come.[14] The very epitome of the mediocre *apparatchik,*

[10] December 10, 1961; February 28, 1962. On the other hand, a provincial daily (*Veszprem Megyei Naplo,* January 31, 1962) reported the sentencing of a young ex-student to 30 months' imprisonment for listening to Radio Free Europe broadcasts and for saying that "real democracy" such as exists in Yugoslavia should also be established in Hungary instead of the still existing "dictatorship of a handful of people."

[11] *Nepszabadsag,* November 19, 1961.

[12] See *Tarsadalmi Szemle,* January 1962.

[13] *Nepszabadsag,* January 7, 1962.

[14] For announcements of the changes, see *ibid.,* September 14 and October 8, 1961. Biszku and Fock are 40 and 45 years of age, respectively.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kiss had only shortly before been relieved of his position as a secretary of the party Central Committee (though remaining in the Politburo) and now found himself also demoted from First Vice-President of the Presidential Council to a mere secretary of this purely representative body, a post never before held by a member of the Politburo.

Since the 22nd Congress, a number of other members of the party's pre-1956 "old guard" have followed Kiss into partial eclipse. Among those demoted thus far (March 1962) as a direct result of the renewed de-Stalinization campaign, the most prominent have been Istvan Friss, relieved as head of the Central Committee's economic department and as a member of the party Economic Commission; Karoly Olt, as chairman of the State Office for Church Affairs and member of the Council of Ministers; Ivan Darabos, as member of the Central Committee and secretary of the Zala regional party committee; Gyula Egri, as secretary of the Baranya regional party committee; and Gyula Hegyi, as chairman of the Sports Commission. Except in the case of Friss, whose removal was announced after he had been censured for obliquely questioning—in print—the investment provisions of the current (1961-65) Five-Year Plan,[15] no specific public criticisms were directed at any of the demoted officials. All of them, however, have long been known as inward sympathizers of a "hard" or "leftist" political line. Their relegation to the background suggests that the political future of other temporary old-guard allies of Kadar, such as Antal Apro, who is still a First Vice-President of the Council of Ministers and member of the Politburo, may also be in jeopardy.

Toward a Better Party Image

Kadar's new moves to de-Stalinize the party hierarchy have developed within the framework of a general campaign to cleanse the bureaucracy of those who wield authority arbitrarily and behave like "petty monarchs," as well as those guilty of venality in office. The party chief has denounced tendencies toward corruption among officials as a "public menace" and has set in motion a concerted drive to impose a code of moral puritanism in place of the loose ethical standards prevalent among many party and state functionaries.[16] The so-called "Török scandal" was unquestionably instrumental in spurring the regime's recognition of the moral erosion of the party from within. The principal in this affair was Istvan Török, a member of the party Central Committee and general secretary of the Metalworkers' Union, whose expulsion from the party was disclosed last December, followed in January by press reports that he had been sentenced to two and a half years in prison for misappropriating public funds.[17]

Besides these efforts to improve the party's public image, Kadar is also seeking to broaden popular support of his regime by proffering some peripheral concessions to the non-Communist masses of the population—without, of course, compromising the essential primacy of the party. This has involved more than just a verbal propaganda campaign to win over the "passive" under the regime's newly adopted slogan, "Who is not against us is with us."[18] The campaign was backed up in February by a reshuffle of junior government ministers (including the "retirement" of Mihaly Zsofinyecz, a member of the party Politbureau from 1951 to 1954), which seemed to foreshadow the gradual replacement of old-line bureaucrats having no other qualification for public office than their party connection by more competent appointees equipped with economic or technical training—and not necessarily Communists. The Hungarian press has meanwhile been giving unusual publicity to the principle, last confirmed by the 7th Congress of the HSWP in 1959, that non-Communists can occupy any positions except in the party organization.

This initiative of the leadership, however, is not without opposition in the party. In spite of the fact that experts, whether Communist or not, are badly needed to cope with the country's economic plight,[19]

[15] Friss was censured for statements made in an article published in the November 1961 issue of *Tarsadalmi Szemle*. The same journal for January 1962 editorially criticized Friss and also carried an apology by him, but the January issue of *Partelet* announced his dismissal from his party economic posts. He apparently remains a member of the Central Committee, at least for the time being.

[16] See *Nepszabadsag*, December 3 and 13, 1961.

[17] Török's expulsion was reported only in *Partelet* for December 1961, but his trial sentence was announced without comment in all the daily newspapers on January 28, 1962.

[18] Kadar used the slogan in a speech reported in *Nepszabadsag*, December 10, 1961, crediting Western journalists with having invented this variant of the old expression ("Who is not with us is against us") to illustrate the difference between the climate of the Rakosi era (linked with the original saying) and that of present-day Hungary. Actually, to the writer's best knowledge, this play on the old phrase had first appeared in *Irodalmi Ujsag* (October 23, 1961), a Hungarian exile publication now appearing in London.

[19] According to an official economic report, real earnings in Hungary failed to rise during 1961, and agricultural output for the year dropped below the 1960 level which already had fallen considerably below the levels of 1959 and 1958), resulting in periodic shortages of various essential foodstuffs.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the old party hands in the managerial bureaucracy are waging an embittered rear-guard battle against the new approach, which they regard not merely as an injustice to themselves but as a politically dangerous experiment for the party.[20]

Their reactions range from querulous complaints such as "Why are we hitting our own people?" to angry protests such as "I would rather defend the people's regime with machine guns than work with a non-Communist!"

The Revisionists Warned

Aware of such currents in the party ranks and of the need to preserve unity, the Kadar leadership—while proceeding against the Stalinist die-hards—has shown itself anxious not to carry de-Stalinization too far or to let popular pressures for more liberalization get out of hand. Thus, it has continued to voice repeated warnings against factionalism in general and revisionism in particular. Stubbornly if somewhat feebly, Kadar and Szirmai still uphold the official fiction of the "October counterrevolution" and seek to forestall any soul-searching and controversial reappraisal of 1956 in the light of the 22nd Congress. The reasons for this reluctance are obvious, for any admission that the action of the Congress has posthumously vindicated Imre Nagy, Geza Losonczy, and Miklos Gimes—who were merely five years too early in their total repudiation of the Stalin era—would be tantamount to a negation of the very *raison d'être* of the Kadar regime. The painful efforts of the present leadership to cover up such unpalatable facts are evident in the following typical statement by Szirmai:

There are right-wing elements who have expressed the opinion since the 22nd Congress that, with the fight against the cult of personality and dogmatism in the foreground, their time has now arrived. They have begun to say that the Congress 'justified' them because they had been fighting for years against 'Stalinism' and for 'liberalization' of the system, and that they ought to be exonerated from 'unjust' accusations. Well, if the question of who was justified by the Congress has any meaning at all, then one has to state unequivocally that it fully vindicated our party, which has been carrying on a constant two-front battle since November 1956. We saw in 1956 how the revisionists, distorting the essence of the 20th Congress, proclaimed themselves to be its champions and standard-bearers. There are some who would like to do the same with respect to the 22nd Congress. These are futile attempts! Our party will not allow the 22nd Congress to be discredited. There is and will be no rehabilitation of revisionism in the international Communist movement and in the HSWP.[21]

The very fact that such harangues as Szirmai's have been necessary would seem to lend credence to reports leaking out of Hungary that reappraisal of the pre-revolt thaw, of the 1956 uprising itself, and of the treatment of Nagy's followers has become very much of a live issue again. There is, for instance, the question of what to do about those former party members—representing some of the 400,000 who did not renew their membership in the re-enrollment of January-June 1957—who have now applied for readmission to the party.[22] This group embraces opportunists, optimists, and idealists. Among the last, there are those who, according to Szirmai, describe themselves as "oppositional Communists": *i.e.,* they reject both "the crushing of the counterrevolution" and the reconsolidation policies of the past five years, but pledge their support to the Kadar regime on the basis of its orientation since the 22nd Congress. These Hungarian intellectuals, who have either been silenced or kept silent during the years since the 1956 uprising, are now trying to break away from the round of platitudes that has characterized the ideological "analysis" of de-Stalinization. Their inner torment and frantic search for a way out of the impasse, without the horror of moral degradation, have been movingly described by Laszlo Benjamin, perhaps the greatest contemporary Hungarian poet, in his latest magnificent poem, "Under the Bloodstained Banners."

Continuing Ferment

These men—writers, journalists, artists, and scientists—cling to the hope of a new Reformation which will somehow infuse the system with a spirit of humanism and of human dignity. But the party is anxious above all to forestall the crystallization of any currents of opposition both within and without its ranks. Thus, for instance, when the organization of the Railway Scientific Research Institute split into two factions early this year, with each faction claiming the sanction of the 22nd Congress for its own position in a bitter debate concerning the degree of party control over pure research, the higher party organs immediately intervened and rebuked both sides. Declaring that there is "no ideological armistice," *Nepszabadsag* censured the "liberals" for their divergences from orthodoxy but also admonished the secretary of the organiza-

[20] See *Nepszabadsag,* January 11 and 25, February 21, and March 1, 1962.

[21] *Tarsadalmi Szemle,* March 1962. See also speeches by Kadar, reported in *Nepszabadsag,* December 3 and 10, 1961.

[22] *Nepszabadsag,* May 5, 1957, and December 3 and 10, 1961.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion for resorting to "impatient" methods, albeit in defense of the "correct line".[23]

It is thus quite evident that the party leadership is doing its utmost to keep the repercussions of the 22nd Congress within safe bounds. Its efforts, however, are seriously hampered by the fact that the reconsolidation of the Communist power apparatus since 1957 has not been accompanied by any appreciable revival of the party ideology. In scope and depth, the current intellectual ferment bears no comparison with the exciting climate of 1956, but nonetheless there are audible notes of dissent among young Hungarian writers and artists, who more than ever look towards the West as a source of creative vitality. It is impossible here to describe the multiple cross-currents manifested in the post-Congress debates about abstract art, contemporary literature, and music, but suffice it to say that these debates have reflected anew the yearning for experiments in free expression.[24]

In the face of these currents, there is a growing realization among party officials that awkward questions about the "right of erring" and "artistic freedom" cannot be put off with stale generalities. Nevertheless the posture of the "guardians of dogma" remains curiously undecided and ambivalent. Miklos Szabolcsi, editor of a literary weekly, described the situation thus:

We are carrying on discussions about details, but we remain mostly silent with regard to the most essential issues. . . . We want to wait for the outcome of discussions [in the Soviet Union] in order that we may know what to support. On such a basis, neither literary criticism nor literature can embark upon a course of creative development. And this wait-and-see attitude is visible not merely in literary life; it is also prevalent among influential groups of intellectuals in general.[25]

However, the political pragmatism and tactical dexterity of the present leadership have so far proven capable of containing the conflicts and inner contradictions of the post-Congress situation. While stressing the principle of the complete independence and equality of the individual Communist parties, Kadar simultaneously speaks out against "polycentrism" and has ranged his party squarely on Khrushchev's side in the Sino-Soviet policy conflict—indeed, he is one of the most outspoken supporters of the Soviet leader in the Communist camp. In domestic politics, he remains a cautious centrist who is willing to grant a modicum of freedom and political participation to non-Communists, but only insofar as this does not jeopardize or impair the party's power—in fact, the primary purpose of the regime's peripheral concessions to popular pressures for liberalization is to arrest the growth of trends towards fundamental changes in the system itself. The concessions have unquestionably produced a certain relaxation of the political atmosphere and, to some extent, a greater responsiveness to public opinion on the part of the regime, with the result that the average Hungarian appears to feel somewhat more confident today than he did before the 22nd Congress. However, recent history has shown that Communist regimes are as capable of concessions as of reversals. Hence, as long as the "commanding heights" remain firmly within the grasp of the party, any optimism about the future should be tempered with a healthy dose of caution.

[23] *Ibid.*, February 6, 1962.

[24] See *Uj Iras*, December 1961-March 1962; *Kortars*, October 1961-February 1962; also article by Laszlo Szecsödi in *Tarsadalmi Szemle*, March 1962.

[25] *Elet es Irodalom*, February 17, 1962.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Poland: A Matter of Timing?

By Adam Bromke

THE NEW DE-STALINIZATION campaign launched at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU brought about no reaction in Poland comparable to the dramatic events following the denigration of Stalin at the 20th Congress in 1956. One reason for this, of course, is that Poland had already been "de-Stalinized" much more thoroughly than any other country in the Soviet bloc. By 1961 there was no need to go through the gruesome spectacle of removing the remnants of a "little Stalin" from a mausoleum, for Poland's top Stalinist, Boleslaw Bierut, who died in 1956, had been buried in the military cemetery in Warsaw. Nor was there any need for new gazeteering, Stalin's name having long been expunged from Polish factories, streets and cities.[1] The Polish counterpart of the "anti-party group," the so-called "Natolin faction," had been eliminated as a political force. Its leaders were not exposed to any severe recriminations, and some of them have even been restored to relatively important government posts, thus giving them a stake in the Gomulka regime and dissipating their effective opposition. Indeed, since 1956 the top leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) has rested in the hands of Gomulka and his close followers, who themselves had been disgraced and imprisoned in the Stalinist period.

There was, however, another reason for the relatively calm reaction to the new wave of de-Stalinization. With the experiences of 1956 still fresh in their minds, the Polish Communist leaders were resolved not to allow the criticism of Stalinism to get out of bounds. This resolution, moreover, was backed by force, for unlike the 1956 leadership of the party, which was racked by internal strife and dissension, the current leadership, with Gomulka at the top, has been firmly in control both of the party and the country at large.

These two elements, then—the effects of the post-1956 reforms and the party's determination not to let the new turmoil impair its position in any way—have limited the impact of the 22nd Congress in Poland. This does not mean, however, that the Polish reaction to the renewed attack against Stalinism in the USSR has not been in many respects interesting and perhaps even far-reaching. Precisely because the Poles had gone so far in 1956, even the small changes introduced in 1961 were bound to be significant. The three most important features of the 1961-1962 reaction have been: (1) a discussion among the top Polish scholars on intellectual freedom; (2) a debate within the highest party echelon on the nature of the Communist system; and (3) a clarification of the party's stand on the Sino-Soviet dispute.

The "Professors' Debate"

The only instance where the reaction to the 22nd Congress extended beyond the confines of the party was a lively debate on the relationship between ideology and science among some leading Polish scholars. The "professors' debate"—as it might be termed because all the participants hold this academic rank—was initiated by the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Professor Tadeusz Kotarbinski. In an article in the October 26, 1961 issue of *Przeglad kulturalny*, written ostensibly on the occasion of the fourth centennial of the birth of Francis Bacon, Kotarbinski weighed the arguments for and against freedom of

[1] There was, however, one rather significant exception: the Palace of Culture in Warsaw, which had been given to the Poles by the USSR in the early 1950's, still (as this author can testify from his recent sojourn there) bears the name of Stalin —apparently to emphasize the strictly domestic nature of Polish de-Stalinization.

Mr. Bromke is a Research Fellow at the Russian Research Center, Harvard University. He has published numerous articles on Poland, one of which, "Poland and Yugoslavia: The Abortive Alliance" (written in collaboration with Milorad Drachkovitch) appeared in the March-April 1961 issue of this journal.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expression. Admitting that at times this freedom is likely to be abused, he asserted that the possibility of its excesses is no excuse for restraining it. "Let the freedom of expression be presumed natural, while the restrictions of freedom be burdened with proving their necessity."

Professor Kotarbinski's article produced an almost instantaneous reaction. Within a few weeks, a number of prominent university professors, representing such different disciplines as philosophy, history, physics, literature and law joined in the debate. One after another they criticized the restrictions imposed on the freedom of scientific inquiry as damaging to the progress of learning, and demanded their removal. The distinguished physicist and former disciple of Albert Einstein, Professor Leopold Infeld, described the one-time repudiation of Einstein's theories, and noting with satisfaction that both in Poland and the Soviet Union the attack against Einstein was over, expressed the hope that freedom of scientific inquiry, and, indeed, freedom in general would be extended in the entire Communist bloc. Although he conceded that freedom cannot be unlimited, and even explicitly recognized the need for some restrictions in the fields of culture and education, he was emphatic in stressing that these should be of a transitory nature. "The present situation," he declared, "is not as significant as the direction in which we are moving. I agree to the present state of affairs on condition that our children's freedom will be greater, not smaller." [2]

INFELD WAS FOLLOWED by a prominent professor of law, Stanislaw Ehrlich, who in the popular Warsaw daily, *Zycie Warszawy,* sharply criticized the restrictions which had been imposed on the social sciences in the Stalinist period. "The unnecessary vigilance in research, the strict determination of the boundaries of inquiry," he observed, "the so-called freedom of science within the limits of Marxism-Leninism, cost us a great deal. Not only the theory of relativity, but also political science, econometrics, and semantics were all repudiated." [3] Ehrlich did not share Infeld's conviction that all those practices belonged to the past. He felt that the prevailing sentiment in some scientific circles in Poland was one of membership in an "association of insurance against political risks." What should be the proper relationship between political authority and science? asked Ehrlich in conclusion. All that the party has to do, he answered, is "to extend its resolute support to [the search for] scientific truth. This and only this is what the party really needs."

Another professor of law, Wladyslaw Wolter, went still further. In an article published in the December 14 issue of *Przeglad kulturalny,* he raised the issue of freedom of thought in general. "Freedom which cannot be abused does not exist," he argued, "for the very granting of freedom assumes the possibility of its abuse. . . The prophylactic denial of freedom might produce even greater harm than taking the risk of freedom being abused. The curtailment of freedom. . . leads to extinguishing the sacred fire of human thought, to the replacement of constructive discussion and polemic from which the truth evolves by the worthless wandering in a prison compound of enchained human thought."

AT THIS POINT the party leaders evidently became concerned about the dangerous turn of the debate. Within one week, two articles—both by members of the party's Central Committee—laid down the official line on the relationship between ideology and science. One, by the influential Secretary-General of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Professor Henryk Jablonski, (*Przeglad kulturalny,* January 18, 1962), asserted that an unlimited freedom of scientific inquiry could easily lead to chaos in research. To be sure, scholars must be allowed to resolve their differences by purely scientific arguments. But as for freedom of choice of the field of study, that "must not be universal and unrestricted, but must be in line with social obligation."

The other article, by the Secretary of the Social Science Division of the Academy, Professor Stefan Zolkiewski, was more explicit as to what fields of study fall within the limits of permissible scientific inquiry:

> Scientific inquiry should be not only free but rich and purposeful. It should, therefore, be subject to scientific and social discipline. No one would deny that the existence of scientific discipline restricts the freedom of a researcher. . . . There exists also social discipline which assists a scientist to participate in the process of creating social values chosen by the nation at a given historical stage. . . We chose socialism. This determines the character of our culture. The link between this social process and the specific type of thought, the specific theory and methodology, that of Marxism-Leninism, is sufficiently . . . proven.[4]

The purely verbal intervention of the party spokesmen was soon followed by a more drastic—and perhaps somewhat ominous—step. On February 1 of this year, at a meeting of the famous *Krzywe Kolo* (Crooked

[2] *Przeglad kulturalny,* November 23, 1961. An English translation of Professor Infeld's article appeared in *East Europe,* New York, January 1962, pp. 32-3.

[3] *Zycie Warszawy,* December 9, 1961.

[4] *Przeglad kulturalny,* January 11, 1962.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Circle) Club—a discussion group that had played an enormous role in the intellectual ferment of 1955-1956—Professor Kotarbynski and the senior Polish Marxist philosopher, Professor Adam Schaff [5] spoke on the subject of humanism and freedom under socialism. Reportedly, the discussion which ensued followed the best traditions of 1956. Several of its participants asserted the need not only for greater freedom of expression, but political freedom as well. "There is only one kind of humanism," exclaimed one of the speakers from the floor, "and that was defined a long time ago by a well known Roman philosopher, St. Augustine. St. Augustine defined it thus: Unity only in dire necessity. When in doubt—liberalism." [6]

In 1962, however, the reaction of the party to the radicalism of the *Krzywe Kolo* Club was altogether different from that of 1956. Soon after the turbulent meeting of February 1, the Communist authorities clamped down on the Club and compelled it to suspend its activities.[7] The suspension, however, has not produced any noticeable bitterness towards the regime on the part of the Polish population—a phenomenon which would have been unthinkable in 1956. The reason for this may well lie in the fact that the discussion in the Club—as indeed the entire "professors' debate"—had been restricted only to a small group of intellectuals, and never had a chance of producing any marked effects on the actual policies of the regime. Whatever its long-range impact on the intellectual and political climate of the country, the fact remains that its *practical* consequences have—thus far, at any rate—been next to nil.

It is precisely because of the academic (in more ways than one) nature of the discussion on intellectual freedom that the second manifestation of the impact of the 22nd Congress—the debate within the party itself—is of potentially greater significance, at least for the immediate future. The debate took place at the 9th Plenum of the Central Committee on November 22-23, 1961, and comprised the second of a two-point agenda, the first being a review of Poland's economic progress. The discussion was apparently considered so important that the wall of secrecy surrounding the deliberations was partially removed. In addition to the report by the First Secretary, which is usually carried in full in the press, two speeches by leading party theoreticians, both dealing with de-Stalinization, were published in the weekly *Polityka.* As a whole the Poles did not go as far as the Italian Communists, though in some respects they came close to the latters' position.[8] Above all, they raised a number of fundamental questions concerning the origin and nature of the Stalinist system.

Soul Searching in the Party

The basic issue was defined by a leading Marxist theoretician, Professor Oskar Lange. "As Marxists," Lange declared, "we know that the phenomenon of the cult of the individual cannot be attributed solely to one man. We are faced with a social phenomenon which requires a Marxist analysis." [9] He continued:

> It is not only a matter of satisfying our theoretical curiosity. Such an analysis is actually needed by the entire international workers' movement. The phenomenon of the cult of the individual and all that is linked with it does not represent an inevitable stage in the process of socialist construction through which all countries must pass . . . and the Marxist theory must indicate the means of avoiding such phenomena.

Since the cult of personality originated in the Soviet Union, concluded Lange, its analysis is primarily the task of the Soviet theoreticians. The foreign Commu-

[5] Professor Schaff is the author of an article published on the eve of the 22nd Congress (*Przeglad kulturalny,* October 12, 1961), in which he declared himself in favor of extending the scope of freedom in the "socialist" countries. Schaff had been writing on this—and related—subjects for some time, thus in effect contributing to and encouraging the general debate on intellectual freedom in Poland.

[6] *The New York Times,* February 3, 1962. It is interesting to observe that in a discussion in the Club some doubts were raised about the need for removing Stalin's body from the mausoleum in Moscow. This, of course, did not flow from any admiration for the dead tyrant, but from the fact that many Poles found this spectacle extremely distasteful.

[7] Arthur J. Olsen, "The Polish Club to Stay 'Inactive'", *The New York Times,* February 11, 1962. The decision to suspend the activities of the club might not have been motivated solely by its vigorous debate. The club, in fact, had been in trouble for some time toward the end of 1961. On the other hand, its suspension does not necessarily indicate that it has been closed down for good, provided the authorities are convinced that its deliberations will be kept within "permissible" limits.

[8] The discussion among the Italian Communists on de-Stalinization, including the views of Amendola (whose speech was described as "interesting") received extensive coverage in *Trybuna Ludu,* November 13 and 17, 1961. The subsequent debate on the same subject published in the December 1961 issue of *Rinascita* received prominent attention in the February 1962 issue of *Nowe Drogi.* See A. Dallin, "Long Divisions and Fine Fractions," *Problems of Communism,* March-April, 1962.

[9] *Polityka* (Warsaw), December 2, 1961. Professor Lange's speech to the Central Committee in a way provided a link between the "professors' debate" and the intra-party discussion. It is not only that Lange is himself an economist of world repute, but his criticism of the Stalinist system also ran along the same lines as that of other Polish scholars, *i.e.,* he explicitly attacked Stalinism for hindering the progress of science.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nists, however, should not be excluded from making their contribution to it. In fact, Gomulka had put forward "an outline of such an analysis," in his speech on de-Stalinization.

GOMULKA'S SPEECH to which Lange referred was, of course, the most important pronouncement at the Central Committee Plenum. In it, Gomulka grappled with the following questions: First, the origin of Stalinist terror; second, the reason why Stalin's rule had remained virtually unchallenged and unchecked; and third, the reason why a repetition of Stalinist methods must be ruled out.[10]

With regard to the first question Gomulka, significantly enough, linked the beginning of terror in the USSR to the forcible collectivization of agriculture. Not that he questioned, of course, the necessity of collectivization; nor did he deny that the use of coercion was unavoidable. But he made it clear that in his opinion it was precisely while compelling the peasants to join the collective farms that terror got out of hand and that the Stalin cult was born. Once this happened, the other developments—the theoretical justification of terror, the rigged trials, the execution of the cream of the Soviet officers corps—followed. Concluded Gomulka:

In this situation, while the heads of marshals, generals, and other high-ranking party and state dignitaries rolled, fear and suspicion spread among the people, and a spying mania was created. The role of the organs of security, the NKVD, was increased . . . gradually becoming more and more independent from the party, until to all practical intents they were placed above the party.

As for the second question—the absence of any articulate protest against Stalin's policies on the part of Communists both within and outside the Soviet Union—Gomulka asserted that this may be attributed partially to fear of reprisals. Yet this, he went on, is not the sole explanation. After all, "Communists are brave and devoted men. They proved through the whole history of [their] struggles that they value the cause of socialism more than their heads." Then why did they prove so helpless in dealing with Stalin? According to Gomulka, it was precisely because they still identified the cause of Stalin with the "socialist revolution," and any opposition to him with "counter-revolution":

Stalin led the socialist construction in the Soviet Union . . . And if Stalin in his activities resorted to impermissible methods . . . and even committed crimes, each Communist . . . was faced with a dilemma: whether, by opposing Stalin, he would not impair socialism; whether he would not hinder socialist construction in the Soviet Union. In the [difficult] situation in which the Soviet Union was placed at that time, this question prevented Communists from struggling against Stalin.

If in groping with this problem, Gomulka straddled the fence between the bolder analysis of, say, the Italian Communists on the one hand, and the heavy-handed apologetics of Khrushchev on the other, he proved to be even less convincing in his assurances that there would be and could be no return to the past.

[10] Gomulka's speech was published in the monthly *Nowe Drogi*, Warsaw, December 1961.

CAREER

Coffins left to right are labeled "Public Good," "Justice" and "Probity."

—From Szpilki (Warsaw), December 10, 1961.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thus as a symbol of changes in the USSR, he mentioned the removal of Stalin's body from the mausoleum and the erection of a monument to Marx—hardly examples calculated to appeal to an audience considerably more wise and sophisticated than its counterpart in Moscow. He also stressed the denunciation of the "anti-party" group,[11] and the restoration of intra-party democracy in the CPSU.

In fact, it was left up to other leaders of the Polish party to offer more convincing and candid explanations. Thus one of the most important spokesmen on ideological matters, Mieczyslaw Rakowski, in an article on the 22nd CPSU Congress, posed the question bluntly:

One might ask if the [Stalinist] experiences would not be repeated. Someone else might add: it was stated at the Congress that there would be no return to the practices of the cult of personality. That's fine. But history knows many pledges which have not been fulfilled. This is true, but pledges are not the only guarantee.

And after listing some of the "guarantees" (essentially no different from those Gomulka mentioned), he went on to say:

The [additional] guarantee is that the conditions preventing anybody from reverting to those practices have been created in the party and the state . . . The policy of the CPSU after the 20th Congress has brought about profound changes in the political atmosphere of the country. Because of this policy the Soviet society has become more mature. This, too, is a vital guarantee.[12]

Similarly, in regard to some of the other problems posed by Gomulka, it was up to second-rank leaders to sketch in some of the more colorful details. Thus the chief party historian, Tadeusz Daniszewski, offered some revealing glimpses of how Stalin's policies damaged the international Communist movement (among them he mentioned Stalin's decision to dissolve the Polish Communist Party in the late 1930's),[13] and an editorial article in the theoretical journal *Nowe Drogi* supplemented these revelations by admitting that until 1956 the unity of the international Communist movement was a fiction, for in practice it had meant the "imposition upon all the [Communist] parties of the views and opinions of one party, or to be more precise the opinions and views of its leadership."[14]

The internal party debate, then, if not entirely candid, nevertheless opened before the rank-and-file as well as the population at large a number of pages from the past which hitherto had been either passed over in silence, or dealt with only briefly and haphazardly. As such, it may yet have a more far-reaching impact on the course of Polish communism than the restive stirrings of the non-party intellectuals. Yet even this debate did not represent the major political outcome of the 22nd CPSU Congress in Poland, if only because—as Lange observed—the new de-Stalinization campaign was primarily a responsibility of the Soviet party and thus affected the PZPR only indirectly. From the point of view of political repercussions another event at the Congress was of much greater significance—namely, the eruption of the Sino-Soviet conflict, and the resulting upheaval in the entire international Communist movement.

Between Peking and Moscow

It is probably because the new crisis in international communism called for practical political steps on the part of PZPR that the first public statements by its leaders on this subject were quite reticent. The Polish leaders proceeded cautiously, clearly awaiting some further developments in the Sino-Soviet duel.

In his speech at the 9th plenum of the PZPR in November, Gomulka, of course, shed some light on the recent developments in the Communist bloc. As had been expected, he came out with a strong attack against the Albanian Workers Party, castigating Hoxha for opposing de-Stalinization, and for not adhering to the line of peaceful coexistence. On the subject of the Chinese support of Albania, however, Gomulka was curt. He did note and voice his disapproval of the Chinese objection to airing the Soviet-Albanian dispute in public; but his comments were rather restrained. "It is difficult," said Gomulka, "to agree with such an opinion, especially since . . . all attempts at resolving the dispute [through internal consultations] failed

[11] In his discussion of the role of the "anti-party" group Gomulka asserted that its denunciation at the 22nd Congress was not due "as assumed by the correspondents of the bourgeois newspapers . . . to the alleged plans of making them criminally responsible [for their deeds], for no such plans exist." It is interesting that this assertion was omitted from the Russian translation of Gomulka's speech published in *Pravda* on November 25, 1961.

[12] *Polityka,* November 4, 1961.

[13] *Polityka.* December 2, 1961. While the Polish Communists have by now rehabilitated their comrades who fell victim to Stalinist terror, they have not gone so far as to rehabilitate his *non*-Communist victims. For instance, the execution by the NKVD of the Polish officers captured in 1939, a fact which was discovered and exploited by the Germans in 1943, has not been officially acknowledged, either in the Soviet Union or in Poland. In a recent speech Gomulka referred to this incident in a somewhat euphemistic fashion, calling it "Goebbels' Katyn provocation" (*Trybuna Ludu,* Jan. 21, 1962).

[14] *Nowe Drogi, loc. cit.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to achieve any result." Furthermore, Gomulka spoke in such a way as to suggest that the Chinese objection had been confined solely to the form of resolving the Soviet-Albanian dispute and had not touched upon its essence at all. The leadership of the AWP, he claimed, ". . . wages a struggle against all the parties which do not accept its program. And this [program] is probably not accepted by any Communist party."

While doing so indirectly, Gomulka left no doubt that he aligned himself fully with the Soviet point of view. He strongly denied the inevitability of a war between the East and the West and hailed the unique position of the CPSU in the international Communist movement by referring to the Soviet role as the "foremost," and not (as Mao had indignantly insisted he should do in 1957) as the "leading" one. He did not omit making a brief disparaging reference to "Yugoslav revisionism," [15] and cut himself off from what he described as the "vague concept of polycentrism." Last but not least, he expounded the need for close unity in the international Communist movement, although at the same time declaring that all the parties should be independent in their internal policies. As an example of proper cooperation among the Communist parties he pointed to the conferences in Moscow in 1957 and 1960.

An article by Mieczyslaw Rakowski in the January 1962 issue of *Nowe Drogi* made the Polish position in the Sino-Soviet dispute more explicit. Ostensibly dealing only with the Albanians, and avoiding any mention of the Chinese by name, the author nevertheless made it clear that he was sharply critical of Peking's actions. Said Rakowski:

The argument that bringing the activities of the AWP into public light plays into the hands of the bourgeoisie does not withstand criticism. Would it be possible in the long run to conceal from the world the position taken by the leaders of the AWP and the practices which they use in their country? Certainly not. And such facts compromise the socialist system and the entire Communist movement.[16]

Then, in order that there be no doubt as to whom he was addressing, the author said: "This should be kept in mind especially by those who tend to reduce the importance of the adventurous policy of the AWP."

Peaceful coexistence between East and West, in Rakowski's opinion, is a cardinal tenet which must be heeded by all the Communist parties. "The Communists carry too much of a responsibility for the fate of the whole world," he elaborated, "to accede to any deviations from the major strategic assumption which is the peaceful coexistence between the two systems. This must always be remembered by all Communists and all [Communist] parties."

On the question of the future relations among the Communist parties, Rakowski similarly upheld the Soviet position. The principles which had been set forth in the Moscow Declaration of 1960, he asserted, are still binding upon all the parties, and "there is no need to look for any other prinicples." Yet at the same time he indicated his option for flexibility by proposing, in effect, to negotiate over the points at issue. The acceptance of the Moscow Declaration, he stated, ". . . does not mean that the unity of the Communist movement is taboo, that it is a subject outside deliberation and discussion." Indeed, he went further and conceded that unanimity might not be reached over all issues. It is only over crucial problems, the issue of war and peace being one of them, where full unity must be preserved.

Shortly after Rakowski's article, an even more pointed (albeit still indirect) criticism of the Chinese position appeared in the Polish press. On February 17, *Polityka* published lengthy excerpts from a speech which Luigi Longo, a member of the Italian Communist leadership, had delivered at the international Communist conference in Moscow in December 1960. By publishing these excerpts—with their disclosures of the duration and bitterness of the Sino-Soviet dispute and the explicit identification of the position of the Albanian party with that of Peking—the Polish Communists have gone about as far as they can, short of denouncing the Chinese by name.

THE STAND TAKEN by the Polish Communists in the Sino-Soviet dispute, cautious yet clearly pro-Soviet, reflects the somewhat mixed feelings with which the Poles watch the sharpening contest between the two giants of the Communist bloc. That the PZPR chose the side of the CPSU is not surprising, of course: not only does their geographic position make it impossible for the Poles to alienate the Soviet Union, but siding

[15] This, however, did not prevent the Deputy Prime Minister, Piotr Jaroszewicz, during his visit in Belgrade in January 1962 from declaring himself in favor of closer economic-cultural cooperation between Poland and "socialist Yugoslavia." *Trybuna Ludu*, Warsaw, January 31, 1962.

[16] *Nowe Drogi*, January 1962. The choice of Rakowski as author of this article is significant. Rakowski is editor-in-chief of the important weekly, *Polityka*, and a rising star as an interpreter of the party line. Yet he is a relatively young man and his official position in the party is a fairly junior one, *i.e.*, he is not a member of the Central Committee. The fact that it was Rakowski and not one of the senior Communist figures who commented on the Sino-Soviet dispute seems one more illustration of the PZPR's caution in this matter.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OVERHEARD IN CRACOW

First Pole: **"I've just won second prize in a contest on memorizing the party line."**
Second Pole: **"You don't say. What was it?"**
First Pole: **"Two weeks in East Germany."**
Second Pole: **"What was the first prize?"**
First Pole: **"One week in East Germany."**

with the Russians and not the Chinese is undoubtedly in line with the genuine sentiments of the people, Communists and non-Communists alike. The reason for this is that the Poles are bitterly opposed to a number of Chinese policies. In the international sphere, they are afraid that China's bellicose posture might aggravate tensions between the East and the West to the point of no return. In intra-bloc politics, they are greatly disillusioned by China's abandonment of its "hundred flowers" course (in which they had put a great deal of hope early in 1957) and its reversion to a hard Stalinist line.[17] Finally, the relations between the Polish and Chinese leaders seem to be quite strained. At the Moscow conference in 1957, Gomulka and Mao clashed bitterly over the extent of internal autonomy of the various Communist parties.[18] And in 1960, at the conferences in Bucharest and Moscow, the Poles firmly supported the Soviet position. The present stand of the PZPR merely represents a continuation of this line.[19]

From the Polish point of view, however, there is another side to the coin. The deepening rift between Moscow and Peking might hold some advantage for them. Chinese defiance of Soviet authority in the Communist bloc is useful for Poland, for in principle it affirms the right of each country to pursue independent policies. In practice, the Sino-Soviet dispute opens for the Polish party some promising opportunities for maneuvering in intra-bloc politics. When the CPSU and the Chinese CP stand united, as the experience of 1957 confirmed, the PZPR is reduced to the status of merely one of several Communist parties in power which have little choice but to follow in the footsteps of the two senior parties. When the CPSU and the Chinese CP are at odds, however, the role of the PZPR (which, after all, rules the third largest country in the bloc) is greatly enhanced. Its support becomes a valuable asset for either side. Although, for the reasons outlined above, the prospects of Sino-Polish alignment (a situation which, it should not be forgotten, virtually existed late in 1956) seem to be very remote at present, the room for maneuvering on the part of the PZPR is still wide. It is no longer solely Warsaw which needs Moscow, but, *toutes proportions gardées,* Moscow which well may need Warsaw.[20] By extending Poland's support to the Soviet Union in its dispute with China, the position of the PZPR vis-à-vis the CPSU is considerably improved. The Polish party acquires the status of a junior, but nevertheless real, partner of the CPSU.[21]

* * *

THE REACTION TO the 22nd Congress in Poland, as a whole restrained, yet in some respects far-reaching, illustrates the complex political situation prevailing in that country. Above all, it reflects the gap between the foreign policy aspirations of the Poles on the one hand, and their ideological predilections on the other. Because of their geographic position—the towering proximity of the USSR on one side and of Germany (whose border thus far has been guaranteed only by

[17] As a keen observer of the Polish scene reported, the Polish travellers to China were " . . . horrified by the super-Stalinist atmosphere reigning there." Indeed, one of them referred in private to the atmosphere in China as the "great leap forward to 1984!" Leopold Labedz, "Poland: The Small Leap Sideways," *The China Quarterly,* London, July-September, 1960, p. 100.

[18] For a more detailed discussion of this phase of Sino-Polish relations cf. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Harvard University Press, 1960) pp. 290-300; also Milorad Drachkovitch and my "Poland and Yugoslavia: The Abortive Alliance," *Problems of Communism,* March-April, 1961.

[19] The extent of the deterioration in the Polish-Chinese relations is well illustrated by the fact that the visit of Mao Tse-tung which had been enthusiastically announced early in 1957, has never taken place.

[20] In this context it is worth observing that in January 1962 a delegation of the CPSU headed by one of the Secretaries of the Central Committee, Demichev, spent twelve days in Poland and engaged in prolonged discussions with the leaders of the PZPR. In an interview given to *Trybuna Ludu* at the end of his visit to Poland, Demichev underlined that full unanimity regarding the resolutions of the 22nd Congress exists between the two parties. At the same time he praised the policies of the PZPR, significantly including those in agriculture. "We see," he said, "that *also in agriculture the policy of your party has brought about good results.*" *Trybuna Ludu,* January 27, 1962. (Italics supplied by *Trybuna Ludu.*)

[21] Should the Sino-Soviet dispute reach the point of a break in state relations, this might have even further repercussions in Soviet-Polish relations. Placed in the position of what the Poles half-jokingly label a "buffer-state," Russia in the long run might be compelled to seek some more lasting accommodation with her western neighbor.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Soviet Union) on the other—the Poles are anxious not to impair their close political bonds with Moscow. Yet, in line with their essentially Western cultural traditions, the Polish people are repelled by the totalitarian nature of the Communist political system and are eager to widen the scope of their freedom. In these circumstances, most of them view prospects of internal democratic reforms coupled with the continuation of their external alliance with Russia as a satisfactory way out of the existing dilemma. It was this broad political goal that animated the Poles in their October 1956 upheaval.

The post-1956 developments dispelled the overly hopeful expectations of the "Polish October." In line with Khrushchev's insistence that all "the socialist countries . . . synchronize their watches," the Polish watch slowed down considerably, too. Nevertheless, it remained a little faster than those of the other Communist states. Paradoxically, this fact ultimately proved advantageous to Khrushchev. When at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU he gave a signal for the watches in all socialist countries to be pushed a bit forward, it turned out that in Poland this did not involve any serious adjustment. The shock of the de-Stalinization campaign of 1961 was effectively cushioned by the changes which had been accomplished in 1956. This does not mean, however, that after the 22nd Congress the Soviet and the Polish watches *are* fully synchronized. The Polish watch still seems to be running somewhat ahead.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Art and Artists in the USSR

EDITORS' NOTE: It is a matter of common knowledge that art in the Soviet Union, no less than every other area of Soviet life, has been subjected to the ideological and administrative control of the Communist Party. Even now, nine years after Stalin's death and six years after the beginning of the "de-Stalinization" campaign, there is still an officially decreed genre to which Soviet artists must defer, and many paintings are still being not only denounced but even secreted by the authorities lest the Soviet public fall prey to their corrupting influence. In the two articles below, the reader will find accounts of both "official" and "unofficial" art in the USSR. The first, by Mrs. Juviler, presents a historical sketch of the development of painting in Russia, with particular emphasis on the art of the early part of this century, now kept under lock and key. In the second, Mr. Slepian offers some personal observations on the role of art and the fortunes of artists—both conventional and unconventional—under a totalitarian dictatorship.

Forbidden Fruit

By Nina Juviler

UNLIKE MORE IMPOSING museum structures, the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow is relatively modest in size, but its flamboyant, Victorian-Boyar architecture draws the visitor's attention. The gallery is separated from the sidewalk by a wrought-iron fence outlining a sparsely planted court, offering a somewhat bleak approach to the entrance. Inside, however, the museum is alive with Soviet citizens of all ages, occupations and backgrounds, who have come to admire Russian and Soviet art. The Tretiakov embraces works from the glorious and mysterious icons of the past to present-day monotypic examples of Soviet "socialist realism." To the foreigner, aware of the numerous currents and metamorphoses that have shaped Western art, the dominating impression of the collection is, perhaps, its exclusively representational, relatively unvaried, often naive narrative style. He may not realize that behind an unpretentious door marked "Vkhoda Niet" (No Admittance) hangs a collection of highly exciting, individualistic painting that could shake the conditioned tastes of Soviet citizens and channel creative curiosities in new directions. This "closed fund," or "reserve," is composed of paintings by Russian and Soviet artists mainly from the first three decades of the present century.

The Soviet government has preferred not to advertise its closed funds, either at the Tretiakov or at the Russian Museum in Leningrad. However, Soviet art experts are familiar with the pictures, and foreigners until recently have been able to gain admission to see them. Unfortunately, because of certain Western articles on Soviet art and artists which were embarrassing to the Soviet government, access to these funds has become very difficult.

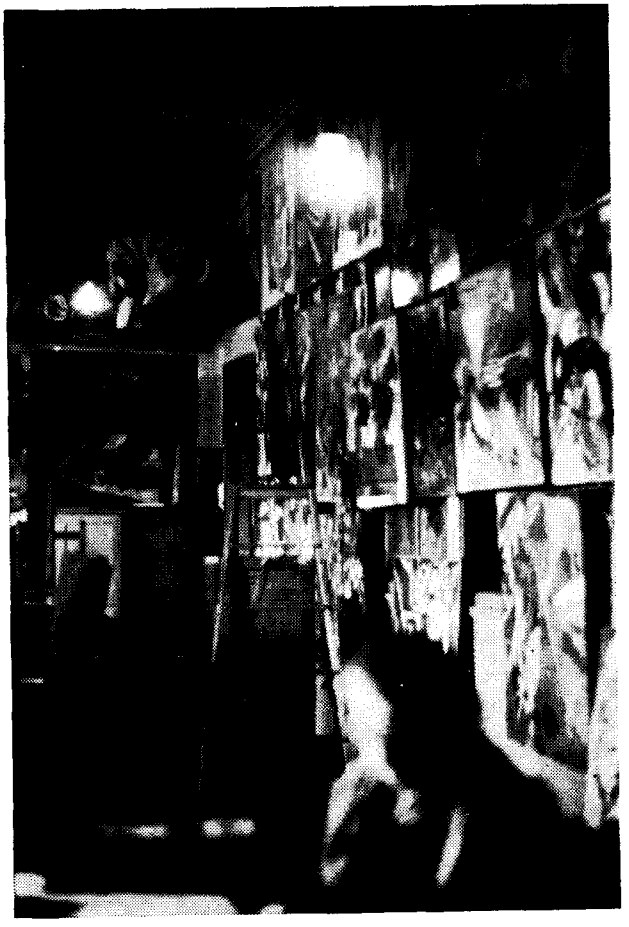
Certainly, nobody fortunate enough to have received a pass, having then slipped anxiously through the

Mrs. Juviler is a young American painter who has studied Soviet art and who visited exhibits and museums in the USSR two years ago.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Vkhoda Niet" door and presented the pass to the tired "*babushka*" seated just inside, will forget the first sight of dozens of closely packed, carelessly hung paintings of Chagall, Kandinsky, Malevich, Pevsner, Gabo, Tatlin and Goncharova—to name a few—which offer a dazzling contrast to the genre painting of all but the icons and a few scattered Russian Impressionists shown in the public galleries.

This rich treasure behind closed doors represents a bridge in time between the past and the present of Russian art. In broad terms there have been three basic phases of artistic development in Russia, two inspired by creative trends from abroad and the third proscribing such influences. In each phase the state has played an important role. Phase one saw the introduction of iconography, imported from Byzantium and encouraged by the state for the benefit of the people. In phase two, the state encouraged Western influences on painting, but for the better part of this period, a privileged elite was the sole beneficiary; many canvasses belonging to the latter years of this phase are now in the closed funds. Finally, phase three saw the advent of Soviet "socialist realism," a state-enforced formula for artistic expression imposed in the name of returning art to the people and purging it of "alien" contamination.



The "closed fund" at the Russian Museum in Leningrad, with works by Chagall (upper right), Popova, Goncharova, Larionov.
—*Photographed by Alexander Marshack.*

While the last phase has prevailed for three decades, foreign trends continue to reach Russian artists, and there is room for supposing that such influence will someday precipitate a fourth phase of development in which greater artistic diversity is again possible. The present paper will review these past evolutions in Russian art and examine their possible implications for the future.

Icons for the People

Icons came to Russia a millenium ago, during the reign of Vladimir, Prince of Kiev, who was converted to monotheism through the Greek Orthodox church in 988 and insisted on widespread conversion among his subjects. Vladimir imported architects from Byzantium to build his churches, and artists to embellish them. The art of iconography introduced by the Greeks was important as a religious as well as a cultural influence, since icons served the necessary purpose of teaching the gospel in clear, direct, stylized picture-form to illiterate pagans.

Workshops were soon established in which Russian craftsmen learned the techniques of iconography. For many years icons remained in the pure Byzantine style, characterized by figures with stern expressions, thin faces, and elongated, stiff bodies; by decorative motifs and designs; and by the liberal use of gold for highlights. Eventually, however, Russian artists in certain areas evolved their own style in modification of the Byzantine example. The earliest known Russian icons date back to the 12th and 13th centuries, and are attributed to the northern iconographic "schools" of Novgorod-Pskov and Vladimir-Suzdal. Though artists from Byzantium were brought into these areas after their relatively late conversion to the church in the 12th century, the Byzantine style soon gave way to the native schools, distinguished by simpler patterns of design, a stylization of nature, figures with round, gentle faces and solid bodies, and intense earth colors. Moscow and the southern schools continued to lean more toward Byzantine characteristics—notably, the elongated representation of bodies, and the use of decorative motifs both in detail and in overall design. One purely Russian contribution to icon painting was the introduction of the "iconostas" in the 14th century, a group of painted panels which served to separate worshipers from the bema of the church where services were performed.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Three iconographers became especially famous in Russia. They were Theophanes the Greek, Dionysios (also a Greek) and Andrei Rublev, a native Russian. Rublev, a pupil of Theophanes, is considered to have achieved the highest refinement in icon painting of all periods. In his prime during the late 14th and early 15th centuries, he worked in Moscow; however, his painting did not reflect the Byzantine influence but rather was closer in style to the Novgorod school. The unique qualities of his paintings were their powerful understatement and their expression of what may be called spiritual humanism. His figures assumed natural poses, their robes followed body contours, and their faces showed human emotions. Yet the primary mood of his work is ethereal and spiritual, and this mood was never subordinated to the tactility of his style.

At the end of the 15th century, the first influences from Western Europe made their impact on Russian art. Italian architects, trained in the classic tradition and presumptions of the high Renaissance, were brought to Moscow and given commissions to design several major edifices. Their work kindled an imitative trend toward more elaborate, decorative and detailed painting in Russia. The eventual consequence was a deterioration in the art of iconography by the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Spiritual simplicity gave way to fuss and confusion when Russian artists tried to adopt western principles of tactility and texture to iconographic symbols.

From Past to Present

The second phase of foreign influences on Russian art stretches from the 18th century well into our own, embracing the variety of trends that sprang up in the modern age. It is this broad phase that will engage our major attention in the present paper.

In Russian art, the starting point of this phase may be dated to the founding of the Russian Academy of Art in St. Petersburg in the early 18th century, during the reign of the "westernizer" Peter the Great. At first French and later Italian artists were imported to teach at the Academy, though Russians gradually assumed their places. Through much of this century, artists devoted themselves mainly to painting portraits of upper-class families in a style not unlike the generally expressionless court portraiture prevalent in Europe at the time. Art was no longer directed to the people, but became the privileged realm of a wealthy elite. At this time many private collections were started, including the paintings of the Hermitage that belonged to Catherine the Great. For the first time, Russian artists began to go abroad to study. The most famous portraitist of the period was Levitski, who painted in the formal tradition of the Academy but achieved notably sensitive renditions of texture and expression. Other better known portraitists included Nikitin, Mateev, Antropov, Argunov and Rolotov.

The scope of artistic subject matter expanded somewhat during the Romantic period in Russia, spanning the latter part of the 18th through the first half of the 19th centuries. This period was greatly influenced by the artist Kiprenski, who on a visit to Italy had been impressed by the antiquities of Rome as well as by the Baroque style of painting. After he returned to Russia, he started a vogue of monumental tributes to the gods of antiquity and depictions of the empirical glories of the past.

The Romantic period also saw the emergence of the school of "Naturalism," started by Alexis Venetsianov in the early 19th century. The Naturalists (including Levitan, Polenov, Repin, Korovin and Serov) painted mainly non-controversial, impressionistic, lyrical landscapes and people. Their intention was not merely to depict nature, but to achieve moods through individual interpretations of nature. This attitude in painting led to the later emergence of Russian Impressionism developed by Levitan and Korovin.[1]

THE LATTER HALF of the 19th century brought a reaction against the formalistic traditions of the Academy of Art, reflected variously in conventional portraiture, in the nostalgic landscapes of the Naturalists, and in the emphasis on the ancients typical of the Romantic painters. The first reaction was evident with the emergence in the late 1870's of the "Religious" school of painting, whose most famous exponents were Nesterov, Gay (ge), Kramskoi and Vasnetsov. These painters ushered in a dramatic change of subject matter, aimed at a specific purpose. Concerned over the tension mounting between the realms of religious faith and scientific fact, their desire was to rekindle and strengthen spiritual feeling by depicting biblical images in terms the observer could relate to his own experience. Thus they illustrated Bible stories with Russian people set in Russian landscapes. Their intention was to make the audience identify with the characters in a painting, the better to comprehend its spiritual content. The Religious painters concentrated especially on creating a Russian image of Christ. This effort to establish a tangible ideal has, in a sense, a later

[1] To clarify further references in the text, it may be worth noting that artists often belonged to and were identified with several different movements in the course of their careers. This is especially true of the early 20th century, when many trends developed within a short period.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

atheistic counterpart in the "positive hero" of Soviet "socialist realism." [2]

Kramskoi, who started as a Religious painter, soon led a new group calling themselves "The 13 Contestants" in an open split with the Academicians. This group became known as "The Wanderers" (*Peredvizhniki*) because they traveled and exhibited all over Russia. Rejecting the Academic tradition that painting should be esthetically pleasing, expressing the harmony and perfection of a make-believe world, the Wanderers insisted that art should deal with life and people in realistic and honest terms, depicting human problems, joys, sorrows and struggles. Most of the Wanderers focussed their attention on what was called "genre" painting, or "ideological reality," which had as its subject Russian country life, peasants, toilers and merchants, and which offered an essentially critical view of Russian social conditions, well illustrated by Repin's noted painting, "Volga Boatmen." Another group within the Wanderers, whose painting was labeled "artistic realism," favored seascapes and landscapes, rendered in bright raw colors.

After a period of great popularity, the Wanderers fell into relative decline toward the end of the 19th century. The social emphasis of their art was, of course, a forerunner of developments to come, and they were to enjoy a later revival. "It isn't freedom of talent that matters, but freedom of reacting to social events," they declared [3]—a theme that was to play an important part in the revolutionary years. At the same time, the Wanderers propounded the view, here expressed by Kramskoi, that: "Only a social feeling gives an artist strength and also the assurance that the work of the artist is *needed and valued by the public.*" [4] Here was one of the first harbingers of "socialist realism," or at least of its stress on art for the people, and the proponents of party permeation of the arts did not hesitate to invoke the Wanderers as champions in the 1920's.

The Birth of Modern Art

The turn of the century ushered in what was to become the most dramatic and exciting, as well as the most controversial, period of development in Russian art. It was this period—from 1900 into the 1920's—that produced the art now relegated to the "closed funds" of Russia's museums. Until the 1917 revolution, and indirectly even afterward, contacts with the West assumed new importance in their impact on art. As we shall see, interest developed in exhibiting the work of Russian artists abroad. At the same time, the work of foreign artists was brought before the Russian public, through various exhibitions and showings. Moreover, Russian artists began to travel and study abroad extensively. These contacts with the various new movements flowering in the West interacted dynamically with Russian innovations and inventiveness to produce new art forms and concepts.

The new era began with the emergence of a group known as "Mir Isskustva" (World of Arts), also the title of the journal it published. Founded in Leningrad in the last years of the 19th century, it was later joined by a group in Moscow known as "The 36 Artists." Mir Isskustva comprised young talents from all the arts; it upheld "art for art's sake," and the aim of its journal was to popularize modern movements in art. The founders were Benois, Bakst, Filosov, and Somov—later joined by the great Russian impresario, Sergey Diaghilev, whose dynamism and great faith in the Russian artistic soul accounted for much of the group's success. Diaghilev's primary aim was to demonstrate the artistic talent of the Russian to the world; Paris became his main battlefield, though he did not ignore the rest of Europe or America. In 1906 he arranged an exhibition at the Salon d'Automne in Paris to display the works of the Russian *avant garde* artists of the day—including Konchelovsky, Falk, Goncharova, Gregoriev, Kuznetsov, Larionov, Lentulov, Markov, Pevsner, Vodkin and Yakuvlev. Diaghilev not only publicized contemporary Russian art, but brought to the public's view the old icons, long committed to dusty obscurity inside Russia's dark, onion-domed churches. His next venture in the arts was the formation of the famous Ballet Russe in 1909, to which he devoted his limitless enthusiasm for the remaining twenty years of his life. His use of new and exciting ideas in all the artistic media which ballet embraces brought much praise from abroad, though also some criticism from the more conservative elements in Russia.

Almost simultaneously with Mir Isskustva, a smaller movement of mystic or symbolist painters developed in Russia. Its most famous exponent was M. A. Vrubel, an artist of penetrating sensitivity and expansive imagination, noted for his use of strong colors and quick, decisive brushstrokes. One of his most striking paintings was inspired by Lermontov's poem, "Demon." Vrubel's painting was in spirit very similar to that of the French symbolist, Odillon Redon. Such artists felt they had

[2] For a critical discussion of the "positive hero" by a Soviet writer (publishing under a pseudonym), see Abram Tertz, *On Socialist Realism,* Pantheon Books, New York, 1960, p. 48.

[3] Quoted in Georgii Lukomskii, *History of Modern Russian Painting (1840-1940)*, Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., London, 1945. p. 43.

[4] *Ibid.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

penetrated and understood the human condition, but in an entirely different approach to reality from that, say, of the "genre" painters, they attempted to get away from what they considered the ugliness of life and to create an atmosphere of mysticism and reverie in their work.

The variety of foreign influences on art was great in this period. French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist art, including works by Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Gauguin, were exhibited publicly in Russia by the collectors Morozov and Shchukin. Expressionism was introduced to Russia by one of the founders of that school, Kandinsky, who like many Russian artists travelled abroad after the turn of the century. Kandinsky toured in Africa, France and Italy, and lived for several years in Germany. In 1911, while in Germany, he and Franz Marc started the Expressionist movement, later joined by Paul Klee. In the same year he painted his first non-objective picture: his aim of producing emotional rather than cognitive responses in his audience opened up a new realm of undefined horizons and exciting ideas—though not all Expressionist artists chose the non-objective method, and Kandinsky himself was later identified mainly with the Futurists. Kandinsky, like a number of fellow artists, returned to Russia with the onset of World War I (remaining there until 1921 when he left Russia to make a permanent home in Germany). The Expressionist movement found some Russian followers, including Chagall, Burliuk, Archipenko and Filonov, although it is primarily associated with German and other European artists.

New Art and New Isms

The trend which offered greatest inspiration for Russian artists was the popular movement known as Art Nouveau in France and America, de Stjl in Holland and Jugendstil in Germany. This movement concentrated primarily on the decorative and illustrative arts and architecture. The art of poster painting developed at this time, the greatest master of which was of course Toulouse Lautrec. Art Nouveau style was linear in design and flowing in form, quite often giving a two-dimensional effect. Mir Isskustva artists recreated many Art Nouveau stylisms, especially in their stage designs and illustrations. The movement also introduced new dimensions into art, one of aesthetic applications to functional objects—such as the bending of steel implements into graceful shapes (an example of a Metro sign is on display at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City). The principles of such experimentation were put to use in the Constructivist movement which developed after 1917. Two noted Russian artists, later Constructivists, were Pevsner and Gabo, who travelled to Holland and stayed there working in de Stjl until 1914.

Another strong impact on Russian art was caused by Futurism. This influence dates back to 1909 when the Italian Futurist painter, Marinetti, held a large one-man show in Moscow. Marinetti's works and his approach to painting created a stir among the artists of the day inside and outside Russia. His theory stressed the animism of objects, the constant movement and change within them, the important relationship between their inner and outer movement, and finally the intrinsic individualism in every object. Under the impact of this theory, objects came to be looked upon as possessors of inner souls, tempting the artist to probe, discover and interpret them.

Many new associations of Futurists were founded by the artistic youth of Moscow; Leningrad then followed suit. "The Jack of Diamonds" was started in 1910 and was joined by Mashkoff, Konchalovsky, Lentulov, Falk and Yakulov. Technically, this was a Cubist school; ideologically, the aim was to record the permanent and stable in objects. The artists retained natural forms, but rearranged planes and masses, keeping in mind structural design and frequently working with inanimate objects.

Others attracted to the new "ism"—including Larionov, Goncharova, Burliuk, Chagall, Kandinsky and Sternburg—referred to folk art or rural scenes (Chagall) for their inspiration. These artists belonged to the next two in a series of Futurist groups, "The Donkey's Tail" and "Target," started by Goncharova and Larionov in 1913. Two journals in defense of the new trends in art also appeared—*The Scales* in Moscow, and *The Golden Fleece* in Leningrad. Many of the Russian Futurists, as well as exponents of other modern schools, became well-known in Western Europe. Their work was exhibited at the Salon des Indépendents in Paris and reproduced in art journals. (A 1917 issue of the Amsterdam journal *Het Signaal,* for instance, reproduced works by Goncharova, Konchalovsky, Kandinsky and Javlensky.)

The last evolution in Russian Futurism was Rayonism, which developed around 1915 and continued until 1917, and is again attributable to Larionov. Rayonism combined elements from both Futurism and Cubism, adding one innovation—the theory that light rays emanate from objects. In Rayonist works, not only were forms reinterpreted and rearranged, but they were shown dispersing light rays in intricate patterns. The two exhibiting groups of the Rayonist school were "The Light Blue Rose" and "The Yellow Jackets," whose members in-

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cluded Petrov-Vodkin (formerly of Mir Isskustva), Sapunon, Saryon and Yakulov (earlier with "The Jack of Diamonds").

Around 1914 another entirely new form of art developed, called Suprematism, whose chief exponents were Malevich, Rodchenko, Rosanova, Drevin, Puni and Lissitsky. The Suprematists sought primarily to achieve balance and proportion between voids and solids, using form in its essence—the cube, the circle, the triangle, the cross, the square, *etc.*—and applying the primary colors (red, blue and yellow), along with black, white and their shadings. The effect of this painting was flat and two-dimensional, excluding all reference to the forms found in nature. Kasimir Malevich, the leader and founder of the movement, defined this new "ism" as "the supremacy of fine feeling in the pictorial arts." [5] He expressed his ideas on form, crucial to Suprematism, as follows:

The forms of Suprematist art live like all the living forms of nature. This is a new plastic realism, plastic precisely because the realism of hills, sky and water is missing. Every real form is a world. And any plastic surface is more alive than a drawn or painted face from which stare a pair of eyes and a smile.[6]

For the artist with a developed sense of realism, said the Suprematists, the "real" becomes synonymous with "essence" (form) and is represented by "non-objective" symbols: his artist's eye reduces all things to essence, which is pure form, which is real.

At first, the works of the Suprematists constituted complex arrangements of forms and colors, but in time they became very much more simplified. Malevich himself worked primarily with red, black and white, laying great emphasis on purity of color. The final step in his development is represented by his canvas "White on White," now at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. The painter Rodchenko seems to have gone a step further in balancing form, color and void, by introducing texture as a dimension. His work, "Black on Black," juxtaposed a mat texture with a gloss texture. He finally reduced form and color to the barest essentials—three square canvases, painted respectively red, blue and yellow.

While this type of experimentation was criticized in some quarters as artistic chicanery, the Suprematists strongly emphasized that artists should be accomplished craftsmen before they attempted to create a "pure" art. Rodchenko in particular also stressed that art should merge with life—an idea that was to come to fruition in the Constructivist movement, which Rodchenko helped to found (together with Tatlin in 1917) after Suprematism had been drained dry of its potentialities.

Art and the Revolution

Constructivism emerged and developed during the first years of the new Soviet state. Inspired by the slogans of the revolution, artists turned with enthusiasm to the task of working for and with the state in the transformation of society. The concept of "art for art's sake" disappeared: art was thought of instead as an instrument vital to the building up of the country. Thus for the first time since the reign of the Wanderers, artists applied their talents in the performance of a social mission. But whereas the Wanderers had merely recorded the social injustices that needed amelioration, artists now assumed an active role in reorganizing society.

The Constructivist movement became the main vehicle of this new art with a mission. The Constructivists expressed their aesthetic principles and theories in a broad range of endeavors, covering the fields of architecture, industrial design, what we know as "commercial" art, the graphic arts, *etc.*, as well as the customary areas of artistic activity. Constructivism was applied not only to the designing, say, of whole factories, but of everything in them, ranging from the machinery and installations to the employees' work clothes—all with the aim of fulfilling functional needs in an aesthetic manner for the benefit of the people. The arts proper were also said to serve a social purpose, infusing the masses with the spirit of the new society. Constructivist artists worked in the materials that were symbolic of construction and building—coal, glass, wood, paper, and iron—producing harmonious arrangements that were known as "collages." Some artists devoted a lot of time to studying the quality of various materials and the responses they stimulated.

The ideology of Constructivism started with the proposition that "the fundamental bases of art must rest on solid ground, real life" (as expressed by the sculptor Naum Gabo in 1920).[7] To the Constructivists, however, "real life" was composed of the abstracts "time" and "space." Volume was not considered space, since it was measurable: only through "impenetrable depth" could space be expressed.[8]

The adaptation of these notions in practice produced an art that was truly as revolutionary as the times. A

[5] Quoted in Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves (eds.), *Artists on Art,* Pantheon Books, New York, 1945, p. 452.
[6] Quoted in Louis Lozowick, *Modern Russian Art,* Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1925, pp. 28-29.
[7] See Goldwater and Treves (eds.), *op. cit.*
[8] *Ibid.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

supreme example was a building conceived and proposed by Tatlin in 1919 as a monument to the Third International. The architect planned a gigantic spiral 400 meters high, leaning at a 45 ° angle; enclosed within this spiral were three separate stories made entirely of glass, in the shapes of a cube, a pyramid and a cylinder, designed to rotate respectively at the speed of a year, a month and a day. The whole of this structure was planned to house various Soviet institutions, though needless to say it was never erected.[9] Other structures designed by Constructivists, some built and still in existence, were the Vhkutemas building, the Palace of Work, the Central Telegraph Office, and the main house of Mosselprom.

Another activity of the Constructivists was the designing of stage sets and costumes. The early 1920's was an era of exciting experimentation in the Soviet theater, and Constructivist artists were called on to participate. Scenery was generally reduced to the barest simplicities, in an attempt to produce psychological effects which would enhance the audience's comprehension of a play's message. Some of the better known Constructivist scenery designers were A. Vesnine, Popova and Vialov.

Preludes to Conflict

Constructivism was the last experimental group in art to have any significance in Russia. In the 1920's pictorial realism reasserted its dominance over Russian art—later to be reshaped by Stalin's notions of "optimistic" realism which debased art into a medium of propaganda.

At the heart of the conflict that arose in the art world were two closely related issues: what properly constituted "art for the people"; and to what extent party control should be extended over the arts. In retrospect, the seeds of this conflict were apparent long before it came to a head. Everyone who supported the revolution also embraced the Leninist notion that art should serve to inspire and enlighten the masses—yet Lenin's early statements on art themselves contained contradictions which led to varying interpretations of this mission.

At the heart of Lenin's views on art lay his concept of *"narodnost"* (loosely, "populism"), with its insistence on the *narod*—the people—as both the inspirer and main recipient of all cultural values:

Art belongs to the people. It must penetrate with its deepest roots into the very midst of the laboring masses. It must be intelligible to these masses and be loved by them. It must unite the feeling, thought, and will of these masses; it must elevate them.[10]

Another Leninist principle, expounded in a famous article written in 1905 and cited *ad infinitum* in the 1920's, was that of *partiinost* ("party-mindedness"), which stipulated that art "must become a part of the general proletarian cause," the latter being represented, of course, by the party.[11] Nevertheless, Lenin was also capable of a more generous treatment of the problem of artistic freedom, as in the following passage, taken from an article written soon after the revolution:

In a society based on private property, the artist produces goods for the market: he needs customers. Our Revolution has released artists from the oppression of these extremely prosaic conditions. The Socialist state now depends on them and places the orders. *Each artist, everyone who feels he is an artist, has the right to create freely according to his own ideal, dependent on nothing whatsoever.* (Author's italics).[12]

Lenin's slogan of "culture for the people" became the rallying cry for Proletcult, a group formed between the two 1917 revolutions, whose support of the Bolsheviks paved the way for its emergence as the dominant organization of artists in the early postrevolutionary years. Proletcult pledged itself to the aim of using art to organize the masses in the collective struggle for the cause of socialism. Its leaders insisted, however, that Proletcult should be free from party controls: they asserted that there were "three independent roads to socialism—the political, the economic and the cultural," and that the cultural struggle should develop "free of interference from bodies concerned with the political and economic struggle." [13]

For several years Proletcult was able to maintain this independence. These were also the years that the Constructivists dominated the development of art, and they —along with other Futurists—had a strong voice in Proletcult. However, there was an element in art circles, as there had always been, who opposed the esthetic ideas and experiments of the modernists and who could see in their works nothing "sensible." Buttressed by the party dictum that "art should be comprehensible to the masses," this group began to find increasing support in

[9] For a picture of Tatlin's model, see Arthur Voyce, *Russian Architecture,* Philosophical Library, Inc., New York, 1948, Plate LXX.

[10] M. Lifshits (ed.), *Lenin o kulture i isskustve* (Lenin on culture and art), Moscow, 1938, p. 299.

[11] *Ibid.,* p. 112.

[12] Quoted in Ernest J. Simmons (ed.), *Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1955, p. 446.

[13] From statements by the Proletcult theorist A. A. Bogdanov, quoted in Edward J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Russian Literature 1928-1932,* Columbia University Press, New York, 1953, p. 9.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the party and government as well as in the public for a return to a more pictorial art.

From 1920 on, Lenin assumed a stronger position favoring party control over art. At the turn of the decade, the challenge to the modernists was still a mere rumbling on the horizon, but apparently the insistence on autonomous independence by Proletcult, as well as various other artistic and literary groups, was proving a thorn in the side of the regime. At this time Lunacharsky, head of the Commissariat of Enlightenment (Narkompros), favored the work of the modernists and had no wish to alienate the members of Proletcult. In 1920 he in fact made the statement:

It goes without saying that the state has no intention of forcibly imposing revolutionary ideas and tastes upon artists. Such coercive pressure can result only in the falsification of revolutionary art, for the first quality of true art is the artist's sincerity.[14]

Lenin, however, pressed Lunacharsky to insist on the subordination of Proletcult to Narkompros at the Ninth Party Congress in 1920. When Lunacharsky persisted in a compromising stand, Lenin personally introduced and won approval for a resolution at the Congress placing the Proletcult under the Commissariat. In subsequent months, a number of artists of various schools left Russia for good.

The New Realism

In 1922 a large art exhibition was held in Moscow honoring the fifth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. Here the paintings of the old Wanderers' group and a new generation of its followers enjoyed marked success in the eyes of both government officials and the public. As a result the Wanderers were awarded a number of state commissions, confirming their comeback.

Now the debate between modernist and representational art became an open conflict, with the antagonists identified as "Left" (the Constructivists, Futurists and Suprematists) and "Right" (the Wanderers and their sympathizers). The various movements of the "Left" formed a united front to meet the challenge to their art—even though remaining, in some respects, at odds with each other. The "Right" also consolidated its forces in a new organization called AKhRR (Artists of Revolutionary Russia).[15] Using Marxist arguments to assert that their rivals were still captives of "bourgeois" influences whose art was alien to the people, the "Right" emphasized its aim to inspire the masses by giving them pictures of true life. The AKhRR manifesto, which in effect declared the birth of "socialist realism," declared:

It is our duty to mankind to perpetuate the Revolution, the greatest event in history, in artistic documents. We render a pictorial representation of the present day, the life of the Red Army, the life of the workers and peasants, the leaders of the Revolution, and the heroes of labor.[16]

By 1924 Lunacharsky, not wanting to risk his position, switched his support significantly toward the "Rightist" stand. In criticizing the "Leftists," he claimed them to be "unreconstructed intelligentsia looking furtively toward bourgeois Europe."[17] He also stressed the need for ideological inspiration in art—"an intense experience which drives the artist toward spiritual expansion, toward rule over souls."[18] Though Lunacharsky could not have foreseen it at the time, his phrase, "rule over souls," presaged the total propagandization of art that was to follow under Stalin, and in fact closely parallels Stalin's later reference to artists as "the engineers of the human soul."

In 1924 a so-called "Discussion Exhibition" was held in Moscow, where for the first time the art of "Right" and "Left" was publicly and deliberately juxtaposed. The party leader and Marxist theoretician Bukharin was sent to mediate at the discussions held on the exhibit. Bukharin, who was more conciliatory toward the Leftists than some of his party colleagues, maintained a neutral position on this occasion, but nevertheless prophesied that all art would eventually become didactic.

By 1925 the Leftists were fighting for their survival. The need for further political intervention against "bourgeois elements" in the arts was debated among party leaders (by then engaged in their own fight for survival), but for the time being the stand taken by Bukharin, who held that the art world would itself force out such elements, prevailed.

Stalinist Innovations

The fate of Soviet art and artists was finally decided with the emergence of Stalin's dictatorship in the USSR. In the years 1927 to 1932, the Stalinist adaptation of "socialist realism" to the purposes of the state was announced and enforced in successive stages, culminating

[14] E. J. Simmons, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 437.

[15] A few minor art groups tried to establish themselves in this period—notably *NOZH* (New Society of Painters), *Bytie* (Being) and *Rost* (Growth)—but lacking power or political influence, they soon fell apart.

[16] Quoted in Cyril G. E. Bunt, *Russian Art from Scyths to Soviets*, The Studio, London and New York, 1946, p. 238.

[17] Simmons (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 403.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 404.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in its absolute and exclusive domination of the arts. Thus the third major phase of Russian art began—that which officially persists today.

Stalin's refinements of "socialist realism" were closely related to the broad political aims and problems of his regime. The program of "building socialism in one country," for example, led him to revise the concept of a "national culture," which had been spurned in the Leninist view as a reflection of bourgeois nationalism. At the 16th Party Congress in 1930, Stalin declared the achievement of a "national culture" to be a positive goal of the regime and gave it a new theoretical interpretation: national culture, he declared, was to be "socialist in its content and national in its form, having as its object the education of the masses in the spirit of internationalism and the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat." [19] Socialist realism, as the means of achieving a national culture, was now defined in terms of these requisites.

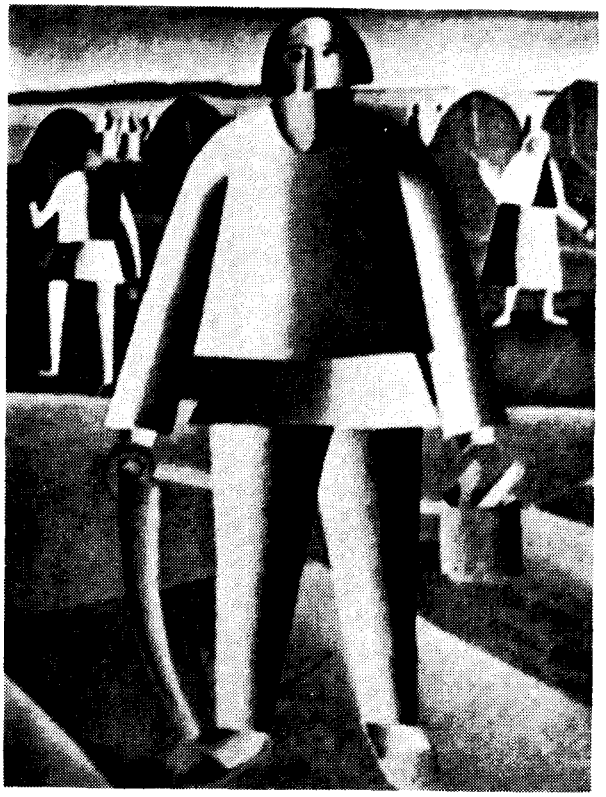
Under Stalin, however, the aim of socialist realism changed in stress from "the education of the masses" to their political indoctrination:

Socialist realism . . . demands of the artist a truthful, historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of the ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism.[20]

In its effect on content, perhaps the most important modification of "socialist realism" introduced under Stalin was the view that art should not *reveal* life in terms of present reality, but should rather *interpret* life in terms of future reality—in short, that it should present an optimistic picture of the future that was (always) just around the corner. This emphasis on positivism was apparent in several of Stalin's early statements on art, although it did not crystallize as an imperative of socialist realism until the middle 1930's.

[19] J. Stalin, *Leninism,* Modern Books Ltd., London, 1933, Vol. II, p. 401.

[20] This definition was formulated in 1934 as a statute of the Union of Soviet Writers; quoted in Tertz, *op. cit.,* p. 24.



Above: "Hay Time," by Malevich, 1909. (Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow.) An example of the artist's early work, before he turned to nonobjective art.

Right: "Composition 219," by Kandinsky, 1919. (Russian Museum, Leningrad.)

—Photographed by Alexander Marshack.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The elaboration of "Stalinist socialist realism" proceeded with a step-by-step tightening of party controls over independent artistic activity. The crackdown on the art world was presaged in the first Five-Year Plan (1928-1932), which emphasized as its major cultural aims an increase in the proletarian "consumption" of art and a reorganization of art under party administration.

The first tightening of the screw was accomplished primarily by economic levers. In 1929 painters, sculptors, graphic artists, decorative artists and architects were united in a single artists' cooperative, *Vsekokhudozhnik*, whose functions were to assign members to commissions at fixed wages, to organize exhibitions, and to sell artists' work to the Central State Buying Commission, the Central Art Museum, the Palaces of Culture, and other state organizations. Since the state was the single, all-powerful patron of the arts, and consequently the sole provider of means to a living, artists were forced into complying with party policies concerning creative activity or else to go without work. In the next two years the party made various other moves to extend its control over artists and to remove so-called "formalist" elements from positions of influence.

The consummation of this campaign came in 1932. In April of that year the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a decree declaring that socialist realism was the sole theory and method of artistic expression suitable to Soviet society and demanding that all artists conform to its principles regardless of the mode of their past work. The decree also ordered the dissolution and reorganization of all artistic and literary organizations. What emerged instead were various "unions" of writers, artists, and so on, set up in such a way that control was ensured from within by party cells and from without by government organs. Henceforth artists became in effect functionaries of the state.

The next few years saw the crystallization of the new esthetic dogma. Artists strove to be "realistic" and "narrative" and to choose subjects "representative" of Soviet society, its people and its historical events. Yet one further stipulation was to be imposed, as we have noted: in 1936 Bubnov, the Commissar of Education, publicly presented the notion earlier aired by Stalin that art ought to depict only positive aspects of life, to the exclusion of distasteful reality. In a speech marking the opening of an exhibition he declared: "Art is beginning to breathe life and to build it—is this not the path towards the now great renaissance of art? Optimism and cheerfulness will now be the company of painters in further creations." [21] The impact of this final demand was expressed in a definition of Soviet art a few years later, in the preface to an illustrated catalogue of socialist realism:

Soviet painting is optimistic, it speaks of joyous feeling; landscapes show the changing aspects of the country, portraits show new peoples; pictures of complex composition depict the Soviet Union's history and its new socialist life and work. Soviet art, answering the interests and demands of millions of working people, strives for a mass character, for large scales, for monumental effects.[22]

This, then, was the new art of the Soviet state. Gone were the subtleties and nuances, the diversity and creative individualism of the unbridled art of earlier years. There remained only the job of removing the evidence of a freer tradition from the public's view. This the Soviet regime undertook to do in 1936, through the person of Kerzhentsev, head of the newly-founded Committee for the Affairs of the Arts (the government's main instrument of control over the cultural unions). Kerzhentsev, in an article specifically attacking the Tretiakov Gallery, declared:

The directors have acted on the liberal principle that the museum's task was to display every tendency in painting without any adequate criterion and without in the least considering whether the works were realistic or not. This supposed objectivity . . . constituted encouragement to all formalistic and crudely realistic tendencies in painting.[23]

In a subsequent article Kerzhentsev spelled out the regime's decision:

Such paintings have no place in the public halls but belong in special buildings to be used by art specialists or to illustrate the very coarse, formalistic and naturalistic errors made by some of our artists.[24]

In short order, all art works which the regime considered offensive were removed from the museums, later to be relegated to the closed funds.

Implications of the Present

Why, one may ask, in the years when foreign currency was urgently needed, didn't the Soviet government sell the art works it had banned and vilified to the highest bidder with hard cash, as it did so many other items? Could it be that somewhere in the official hierarchy a few voices that counted continued to value the

[21] Quoted in Lukomskii, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

[22] *Soviet Art,* State Art Publishing House, Moscow, 1939, pp. 3-4.

[23] As quoted from *Pravda,* June 1936, in Philip E. Mosely, "Freedom of Artistic Expression and Scientific Inquiry in Russia," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Philadelphia), November 1938.

[24] *Pravda,* June 7, 1936, quoted in *ibid.*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

art of former years and perhaps to feel that it would some day again become a national asset?. It seems possible.

The fate of the closed funds is part of the larger question, posed early in this paper, whether the age of socialist realism will eventually give way to a new, fourth phase in Russian art, marked by greater breadth and diversity of artistic expression and by a more liberal attitude toward the arts on the part of the regime. The intermittent signs of a relaxation of cultural policies in the post-Stalin era, along with the new increase of contacts with the outside world, seem to offer hope of such a development.

In the first period of the "thaw," some of the collections of earlier art that had been banned, along with works by various 20th-century Western artists, were organized in exhibitions that were opened to the public. While 1956 and its aftermath brought a strong reassertion of "socialist realism" as the only permissible guidepost of culture in Soviet society, the doors that had been opened could not be entirely closed again, and the regime—acting from expediency, or wisdom, or both—has refrained from attempting such an effort. Thus, for example, the authorities have permitted some works by foreign artists of the Post-Impressionist period to continue on display in the museums, even though works by Russians were again withdrawn.

Perhaps the most important consequence of such new contacts has been the emergence of a "double standard" in art: for the past several years many Soviet artists and painters, while continuing to earn their livelihood through work in the approved mode, have devoted their private energies to experimenting with new techniques, producing works that are exhibited to small circles of like-minded artists. Thus a thriving world of nonconformist creativity has sprung up side by side with the official world of socialist realism—a situation that is known and tacitly tolerated by the authorities. Similar movements have developed in other cultural areas such as literature and poetry.

This behind-the-scenes ferment testifies to the strength of the impulse toward greater freedom of creative expression in present-day Russia. The pleas heard in 1956 for a less restrictive official culture may no longer be aired in the open, but the trend they expressed seems inexorable. There are already signs, faint as they may be, that the new spirit in art must some day push beyond the limits of private circles to make its influence felt on a wider public.

One such indication, personally witnessed by the writer, was the reaction of Russians at an exhibition of art from various Communist countries, held in Moscow in 1959. Most of the works displayed were firmly in the spirit of socialist realism (including Chinese scrolls, in which the diaphanous landscapes of an ancient art were transformed with such features as construction cranes, electric dams, and muscular toilers). The display from Poland, however, offered a striking contrast of semi-abstract works rendered in individual experimental styles (though more conservative, it might be noted, than those on view in Poland proper). This display had a marked impact on its Russian audience: small groups of observers carried on excited conversations in front of the paintings, and remarks could be overheard in praise of their freshness and imaginative qualities.

Another small straw in the wind is the recent announcement that a Western work on art of the *verboten* period—John Rewald's *Post - Impressionism-From Van Gogh to Gauguin*—will soon appear in an illustrated Russian translation. In the past, discussions of such art not only have been one-sided attacks but have appeared without illustrations for reference. Now Russians will be able to see printed reproductions of the foreign works so long characterized as "decadent" and "bourgeois," as well as to view the occasional samples permitted of late to hang in the museums.

Recently, too, a protest has been voiced against the isolation of the "closed funds" from public view. The complainant is the venerable Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg, who writes in his newly published memoirs:

Our museums possess superb collections of the "Left art" of the early postrevolutionary years. It is a pity that these collections are not open to the public. You can't throw out a link from the chain. I know young Soviet artists who were "discovering America" in 1960. They were doing (or to be more precise, trying to do) what Malevich, Tatlin, Popova and Rozanova had already done in their time.[25]

While touring through the "closed fund" of the Tretiakov Gallery, the present writer asked a young curator who had come along as guide when she thought the paintings in the fund might be publicly exhibited again. She replied, "In five years a new larger building will be erected; then there will be room to show these paintings." Whether this was a stock answer for inquisitive foreigners, or whether it had some substance of truth in it, is impossible to tell. One can only hope that the Soviet regime will one day bend an ear to such counsel as Ehrenburg's, realizing that the free, creative spirit of the treasures of the past is not a force to be feared but an influence to be welcomed, if Soviet art is ever to achieve the heights which its heritage suggests.

[25] I. Ehrenburg, "People, Years and Life," Part II, *Novyi Mir* (Moscow) January and February 1961; as excerpted and translated in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* (New York), May 3, 1961, pp. 5-6.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Young vs. the Old

By Vladimir Slepian

IN CONTRAST TO the experimental and varied cultural scene of the 1920's, Soviet art and literature during the 1930's and 1940's are usually described as examples of the limiting effects of "socialist realism." This monolithic doctrine and its institutional consequences were laid down in 1932 by the resolution of the CPSU Central Committee on "Reorganization of Literary and Art Institutions." [1] The decree provided that all independent or unofficial art and literary groups were to be liquidated and that all Soviet artists and writers were to be enrolled in separate unions dedicated to carrying out party policy—which in the arts was summed up as "socialist realism." These directives were swiftly put into practice and very soon all artists found themselves united in the Union of Soviet Artists just as all writers were to be found in the Union of Soviet Writers.

Exactly what is "socialist realism?" On the one hand it is an ideological bludgeon used, rather efficiently for the most part, to keep creative artists in line. On the other hand it has been presented as a serious artistic doctrine—and this is another matter entirely. The official definition—the portrayal of reality (especially Soviet reality) from a socialist point of view—sheds little light since it leaves open the choice of subject and technique. In fact, the doctrine remained elusive even to those officially responsible for its formulation and execution. Speaking in Prague in the spring of 1958, the Soviet novelist Sholokhov confessed that he did not know what socialist realism was. He recalled that once, embarrassed by his lack of understanding, he turned for an explanation to Fadeyev, Secretary of the Union of Soviet Writers. But even Fadayev failed to provide a satisfactory response.

The story is told that a group of Soviet writers once put the same question to Stalin. "Write the truth," was Stalin's answer. This truth, however, disappeared in the coffin with Stalin and so the mystery remained.

The Myth of "Socialist Realism"

Actually, like the emperor's new clothes in Anderson's fairy tale, socialist realism as a new artistic creative force never existed at all. Or, more precisely, it existed only in the press, as a slogan for the attainment of political objectives, and was essentially no different from the other forms of Soviet propaganda and agitation. For in practice, as I can testify from my own experience, socialist realism was never mentioned in studio art classes or in the interminable discussions of painting among Soviet art students. The first time I heard the term in an academic situation was just before the examination for the certificate of proficiency in the history of Soviet literature. Having learned the official definition on the eve of the examination, the students very quickly forgot it. They memorized it once more a month before taking the entrance examination for the art institute.

As art students, we heard the phrase only at Komsomol meetings, lectures on Marxism, and in annual examinations in political subjects. We all knew that many paintings which were praised in the press as outstanding contributions to the art of socialist realism were painted by artists who showed not the slightest interest in the doctrine. The newspapers constantly harped on the necessity of intensifying the education of young artists in the spirit of socialist realism. In fact, however, socialist realism was more like a chemical element in the atmosphere which was assimilated without being noticed.

[1] Central Committee decree of April 23, 1932.

A young abstract painter born in the Soviet Union, Mr. Slepian left his native country in 1958 and now lives in Paris. He has recently developed a theory of art which he calls transfinitism, *and which holds that "the sole purpose of the creative act is the attainment by the artist of inner freedom which is possible only within this act."*

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As for the pictures painted by Soviet artists and hailed as examples of socialist realism, they are more or less successful imitations of the pictorial art of the Russian national realists of the nineteenth century. They differ only in their subjects and not too significantly even in that respect. Admiration for national realism is not surprising in a country with an enormous peasant population. Much more interesting is the fact that this pictorial style continued to dominate Russian art after Russia had given Kandinsky and Malevich to the world and even after the Soviet Union had entered the epoch of earth satellites.

It is worth noting that the leading theoreticians of socialist realism, Stalin and Zhdanov, themselves recognized the Russian national character of the doctrine. Stalin had declared that art in the USSR must be "national in form and socialist in content." And Zhdanov had called Russian national realism the highest achievement of nineteenth century world culture. Combining these two statements, we get what might be termed Russian national socialist realism.

SOVIET WRITING USUALLY refers to Russian national realism of the nineteenth century as critical realism, emphasizing that its purpose was to criticize the vices of Tsarist Russia. The Russian national realists considered it their mission to participate in social life by depicting the hard lot of peasants and painting portraits of persons who opposed serfdom. Organizing mobile exhibits, they traveled all over Russia showing their paintings and arousing interest in the conditions of the peasants. It is not hard to see why this kind of painting proved to be most suitable for the purposes of Soviet propaganda almost a century later. Nineteenth century Russian realism was intended for the edification of the least developed citizens and therefore excluded everything that could hamper their understanding of the painting's didactic message. This quality of pictorial simplicity was perfect for propaganda. Therefore, when the question arose as to which art of the past should become the approved model for Soviet artists, the choice was almost inevitable. National realism's quality of being comprehensible to all had the further advantage that it was controllable by the leaders, who could easily spot any deviation from the official line.

The task of the nineteenth century Russian realists, however, was considerably simpler than that of Soviet painters. It is easy for anyone to discover the faults in the life round him. But socialist realism did not ask the artist to paint the flaws in Soviet society; rather, it gave him the more complex and difficult job of discovering and painting those aspects of life that seemed to be in keeping with the ideals of communism. This job proved to be possible only under the guidance of the party and the state.

Such official guidance, contained in the 1932 party directive, was implemented with the help of a complicated system of controls. This system includes the following features:

1. There is a single Union of Soviet Artists, committed to the style of national realism, and having exclusive control of the facilities for creative work: exhibit halls, studios, working materials and supplies, orders for specific works, *etc.*
2. All exhibits arranged by the Union are organized under the control of the Ministry of Culture and party organizations.
3. All orders for paintings come to the Union from party, state, trade-union and Komsomol organizations.
4. The Ministry of Culture regularly assigns artists to paint pictures for exhibits devoted to important events or topics—*e.g.*, Twenty Years of the Red Army, Workers on a Collective Farm, and so on.
5. All Union members are constantly informed by party organizations within the Union about forthcoming tasks and are required to study political science at seminars and conferences.
6. All newspapers and magazines, being party organs, evaluate new works solely from the party's point of view.
7. Artists who paint consistently in the approved style may be rewarded with highly-paid orders and such titles as People's Artist of the USSR, Honored Art Worker, *etc.*

The Training of Soviet Artists

These, of course, are measures by which the party exercises control over trained professional artists. But even more basic and influential have been the methods of training the younger generations of artists. Some of the devices employed by the party to insure the ideological purity of art students are well known. Thus teachers reputed to have unhealthy tastes were removed from the staffs of art institutes. In the same way the curriculum excluded from the history of art the whole period of Western art from the Impressionists to the present-day abstractionists, including such Russian artists as Kandinsky, Malevich and Chagall. The term "formalism" was introduced to unite all of these nonrealists, who were then simply dismissed with the comment that their art was decadent. In addition, all examples of "formalism" were removed from museums

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of painting and sculpture; and all books, magazines, reproductions and newspapers containing material relating to "formalism" were removed from the libraries.

But even apart from such explicit actions to keep art training pure, the entire educational process for aspiring artists was directed toward the integration of the individual into the system, so that he would emerge almost unconsciously as a professional artist of "socialist realism." The following observations are based on my own experiences as an art student in the Soviet Union.

Let me assert at the outset that the integration process does not begin during the first seven years of the artist's life. The drawings of Soviet children up to this age do not differ from those of children in capitalist countries. They are full of magnificent fantasy and naiveté, display a strong feeling for color, and contain no elements of socialist realism. Moreover they are highly individual. I once saw a collection of children's drawings by artists who later became famous masters of socialist realism. These drawings were so varied that it was difficult to believe that their authors were able later on to display such a marvelous uniformity of technique.

During the ages 7 to 12, formal instruction in art begins, but socialist realism is absent from this period, too. Drawing lessons in school teach the children to depict elementary objects in accordance with the rules of perspective and chiarascuro discovered by da Vinci.

From 9 to 15 years of age, children with an inclination for art may go to the art studies of the Pioneers' Homes during non-school hours. In Moscow such buildings are found in each section of the city. There is also a central City Pioneers' Home, and it was here that the cloudless beginning of my art career took place between 1944 and 1945. I recall with gratitude my teachers, who were not very strict and whose system of teaching had a naive and archaic quality. There I learned to draw fairly complex objects and landscapes of town and country. I painted a great deal in water color and was taught to judge a painting good by the criteria that "it bears a resemblance" and "it is beautiful." Favorite subjects were landscapes with a road disappearing in the endless distance, blackened wooden peasant houses and carts on either side, and small bridges across a creek. Preferences in town views were for small yards, sheds, streets blocked with snow, lonely lamp posts, and other such sights well known from innumerable pictures by forgotten painters of the nineteenth century. I also drew unpretentious scenes after the manner of such nineteenth century Russian painters as Repin, Levitan and Serov. Sometimes, however, I would show my teacher drawings which turned out to be, quite unexpectedly as far as I was concerned, of an expressionist character, but he regarded them simply as innocuous phenomena of a transitory age.

This somewhat melancholy and elegiac character of our art—I might add that most pupils had a passion for representing churches and cemeteries—did not prevent us from being very cheerful in life. We thoroughly enjoyed occasions which allowed us to feel snobbish and superior, as when Comrade Krasavchenko, Secretary of the Moscow Komsomol Committee, took a sculptured copy of the head of Michelangelo's "David" to be an image of a famous Soviet heroine.

The training of a Soviet artist lasts for about 15 years. Between the ages of 12 and 18 many pupils study at secondary art schools where at the same time they acquire a general education. After receiving a certificate of proficiency, they may take a competitive examination for higher educational art institutions where they study for five years. Another procedure is to study for seven years in a regular school and then enroll in an art school or technical school which trains teachers of drawing for regular schools and artists for applied arts. After completing school the pupils who distinguish themselves have the right to enroll in the art institutes, and the rest must work for three years wherever they are assigned. To be accepted in any art educational institution one must take competitive examinations in drawing, history of the USSR, and literature, as well as other examinations, depending on the particular school. The path to the Union of Soviet Artists inevitably passes through some such institute.

The history of art, as we were taught it, was synonymous with the history of realism. In this sweeping panorama, realism originated in Greece and was then succeeded by decadence until the Renaissance, which represented a higher stage of realism. The Renaissance was followed by a new period of decadence, and then finally came Russian art, the highest stage in world art. This striking conception, which ignored whole epochs and civilizations, was adopted by the Russian artists of the nineteenth century themselves. Analogous views were held in other countries in the nineteenth century, except that French or German or Polish art was variously conceived to be the highest point ever reached. In fact, these painters of different nationalities had much in common, so that landscapes by Shishkin compete in their pedantry with paintings by the German national realists.

The exemplar of academic realism in the Stalin era was Alexander Gerasimov, President of the Academy of Arts of the USSR, winner of the Stalin Prize, People's Artist of the USSR, and leading figure in

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Soviet art between 1932 and 1953. No other painter did as much to glorify the image of Stalin. His portraits of the Soviet dictator were a ubiquitous and inescapable feature of the Stalin era.

The Case of Alexander Gerasimov

There is certainly nothing unique in an artist's persistent portrayal of his country's ruler. A comparison, however, of Gerasimov's portraits of Stalin with Velasquez' seventeenth century portraits of the King of Spain suggests the special qualities of Russian and Soviet art. Velasquez portrayed his subject honestly, representing the king's human weaknesses in a manner that could not be concealed even by royal attire. He no doubt encountered difficulties resulting from the ruler's cantankerous and capricious character, yet the portraits reveal above all the imagination and emotions of the artist. In all Gerasimov portraits of Stalin, on the other hand, whether the Generalissimo is seen in the intimate surroundings of a summer house in the Crimea or at meetings of great public importance, there is always a calm and benign smile lurking under the subject's moustache. The artist shows only what he knows the subject wants to be shown.

Apart from differences of talent, the portraits of these two painters differ essentially in their social character. Velasquez' portraits of the king were intended to be seen by the king himself, or his court, or his mistresses. Remaining in the halls of royal palaces, they could not discredit the idea of monarchy in the eyes of the people. Gerasimov's portraits, on the other hand, were distributed by the millions of copies in the form of reproductions, photographs, newspaper and magazine illustrations, and imitations by other painters. Under these circumstances neither the model nor the artist could regard the portrait as his mere personal concern. These paintings, even more than those by the Russian national realists of the nineteenth century, were intended as public and propagandistic works.

Gerasimov's artistic influence did not end with his portraits of Stalin. He is credited with initiating the dismissal of all "formalist" teachers and the closing down before the war of the Neo-Western Art Museum in Moscow, which had one of the richest collections anywhere of Renoirs, Monets, Pissarros, Degas', van Goghs, Cézannes, Matisses, Picassos and others. The museum building was later transferred to the Academy of Arts of the USSR, of which Gerasimov became president, and all the great paintings of the School of Paris were dispatched to cellars and carefully guarded against invasion by the curious.

Now I would like to add a footnote to Gerasimov's career which is perhaps not generally known and which sheds some light on the intellectual and artistic atmosphere in the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. Many of the fantastic events which electrified us in Moscow at that time—some of them of enormous, and some only of symbolic significance—are familiar enough: the repudiation of the "doctor's plot," Tito's ride with Khrushchev in an open car, Nehru's speech at the Lenin Stadium on socialism without the dictatorship of the proletariat, Yves Montand's *"Je t'aime,"* sung before thousands of Muscovites in the Sports Palace, and so on. But what is not so well known is the fact that during those turbulent days it came to light that many artists and professors who for the past few decades had proclaimed their adherence to socialist realism had in fact not succeeded in eradicating from their souls a strong sympathy for "formalism." Even before 1953, we learned, they had kept books and reproductions of "formalists" in their homes; more, some of them had even *painted* "formalist" canvasses, but in so guarded a fashion that it had been possible to live under one roof with an admirer of Picasso, considering him all the while an admirer of Gerasimov.

This apparent conflict of loyalties came into the open most dramatically at a *soirée* at the Moscow House of Architecture in honor of Pablo Picasso, the Communist "fighter for peace," whose paintings had been suppressed in the Soviet Union until a retrospective exhibit of his work opened in Moscow in October 1956. The *soirée* was organized by the Academy of Arts of the USSR and was very likely inspired by the most overt and prominent of Picasso's Soviet admirers, Ilya Ehrenburg. Although the big hall was full of painters, writers, actors, musicians and students, and many had to be turned away for lack of seats, no information about the ceremony appeared in the press.

Before an enormous portrait of Picasso were placed a table for the chairman and a row of a dozen or more chairs on each side. The first person to appear on stage, possibly as a result of someone's diabolical planning, was none other than Alexander Gerasimov. He was greeted with general laughter which increased as he jog-trotted with short steps past the first row of chairs, then the table, and then the second row of chairs, finally seating himself at the extreme opposite end. As he took a handkerchief out of his pocket to wipe the sweat pouring down from his forehead, the laughter in the hall rose to a universal roar.

Ehrenburg was next to appear and took his place at the chairman's table amidst a great ovation. Then, one by one, other well-known personages appeared, each

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE ART OF GERASIMOV

Above: "Stalin and Voroshilov at the Kremlin," 1938. According to a Soviet critic at the time: "The reason for the extraordinary popularity of this picture stems no doubt from the fact that it represents two men very dear to each Soviet citizen. . . ." (Reprinted from *An Illustrated History of Russia*, by Joel Carmichael, Reynal & Co., New York, 1960.)

taking a seat in the row of chairs opposite that in which Gerasimov was seated. When the proceedings began, one side of the stage was fully occupied, while a dozen empty seats continued to separate Gerasimov from the chairman. And all the while laughter and applause expressed the audience's awareness of the ironic reversal of roles, with Gerasimov isolated and Picasso honored.

Less than five months after the Picasso exhibit, in the first week of March 1957, the Congress of Soviet Artists met and installed a new board of directors composed entirely of "revisionists." Gerasimov was among the old Stalin Prize laureates who failed to be elected. Soon afterwards he also lost the post of president of the Academy of Arts of the USSR, and, together with other notable masters of socialist realism, found himself on the brink of unemployment.

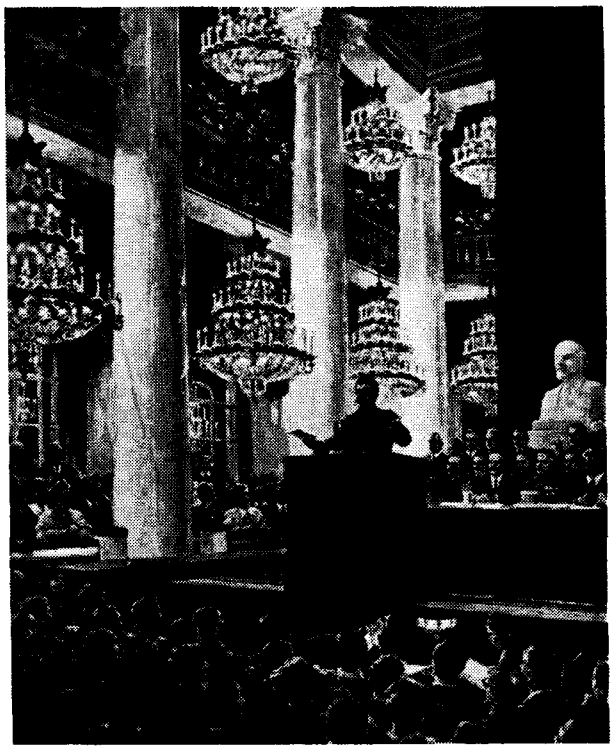
He was saved from ultimate downfall, however, by the Central Committee which arranged for the creation of another union—the Union of Artists of the RSFSR. In this new union all of the discharged Stalin Prize artists again obtained leading posts, and in time they were once more exercising authority in the larger Union of Soviet Artists, of which the RSFSR Union formed an important part.

Although the bureaucracy of Soviet art organizations settled back to conservative direction, there can be little doubt that events since Stalin's death, and especially between 1956 and 1958, have stimulated and shaken up Soviet artists to such an extent that one can no longer imagine a total return to the doctrine and practice of socialist realism.

The Impact of Picasso

For me and for many young Soviet artists, the Picasso exhibit at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts was the most important single event of our artistic lives. The triumph which this exhibition enjoyed in Moscow and subsequently repeated in Leningrad was widely known in the Soviet Union but not in the West. In the Soviet press only one or two newspapers devoted a few lines to the exhibit after its closing. There were no reproductions, no radio or television broadcasts, no articles in art magazines about the show. However, in spite of the indifference of the press, I can testify that Pablo Picasso's success in Moscow and Leningrad was every bit as—and very likely even more—enthusiastic than any he had ever enjoyed in the West. During two whole weeks in the Pushkin Museum from early morning until closing time, a gigantic line

Below: "We Have a Metro!," 1949. Commemorating a speech by J. V. Stalin at Moscow's House of Trade Unions, at a meeting dedicated to the opening of the Metro in 1935.



PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of people waited outside and the militia was compelled to admit people in small groups, because the lucky ones who got into the exhibit did not want to leave and there was no vacant space in the halls. Every day at the exhibition I met outstanding writers, musicians, scientists, actors, and painters. But the most numerous spectators were young people who, excited by the discovery of a personal and revolutionary art, filled the hall from morning till evening. Right there, in the halls, discussions were held on such subjects as aesthetics, trends in painting, and the status of Soviet art.

Picasso was expected to be present in person, but the explosive developments in Hungary prevented his arrival. After the exhibit closed in Moscow, young students on their own initiative organized discussions about Picasso and about modern art in general. These meetings took place in the Stroganov Art School, the Institute of Construction, the Moscow University, the Institute of Cinematography, the Theater Institute, and the Institute of Architecture. Entirely unofficial, they were attended by students from various institutes who learned about them over the telephone, and speeches were made which often overstepped the limits set by the administration.

Perhaps the most interesting development of this kind was an attempt to organize spontaneously an all-Moscow meeting of students on problems of art. This attempt originated in the School of History of Moscow University. The local students received permission from the administration to organize a discussion of an article in *Pravda* directed against impressionism.[2] Invitations were issued to students from art educational establishments. Anticipating that such a discussion might take a bad turn, the school administration at the last moment canceled it. Several hundred students from various institutions, however, came to the meeting hall and upon finding that no administrative people were present, they decided to organize the discussion by themselves.

This proved to be simple enough since several people in the audience had come with prepared papers. The first speech was made by a young painter on the subject of "the artist's creative freedom." After the discussion a preparatory committee was selected and charged with convening a large meeting of Moscow students. They proposed that a small meeting devoted to the Picasso exhibition be held at the Physics Department, with the permission of the administration. Then students of all institutes would be informed of this meeting, and it was expected that thousands of students would come. And in fact many institutes learned about the planned meeting from handwritten bills posted on the eve of the event.

When at the last moment the administration learned about the plans for the meeting, all school studies were discontinued, lights were put out all over the building, and the doors were locked. The Director of the Pedagogical Institute in Moscow, who banned the meeting, told students who tried to vindicate themselves by referring to Picasso's communism: "Yes, I know that Picasso is a Communist but there is too much nondescript impressionist rubbish around him!" Similiar events took place in Leningrad after the transfer of the Picasso exhibit there.

In addition to the Picasso show, there were exhibits of the symbolist painter James Ensor, of Mexican drawings, of French books and reproductions of French paintings before Picasso, of contemporary Indian painting; also the international exhibition at the World Festival of Youth, retrospective exhibits of a number of Soviet painters such as Lentulov and Tyshler, whose works had hardly ever been exhibited during the preceding 20 years, or Konchelovsky, Deyneka, and Saryon whose works had been condemned prior to 1953. Russian modernistic art of the beginning of the century, however, was not exhibited: paintings by Kandinsky and Malevich are still under lock and key.

All these events certainly could not fail to attract the attention of the Central Committee which had discovered that revisionism was so far out of bounds as to demand the rehabilitation of even abstract art. Khrushchev personally undertook to set things in order. As in the case of the "revisionist" writers in 1957, the First Secretary invited a number of prominent creative artists to the government summer cottage, where he reminded them of the familiar principles which should govern their art and indicated how their work should develop. The artists were given to understand that while a certain minimum of courtesy was necessary in relations with Picasso in this epoch of peaceful coexistence, this did not mean that we needed our own Soviet Picassos.

Spontaneity of the Young

While all these discussions, elections, and changes were taking place in the official world, young artists boldly painted pictures which completely ignored the rules of socialist realism. In their living quarters at the Leningrad Academy of Arts (The Repin Institute of Painting), for example, a group of students flaunted

[2] "The Artist and the People," by P. P. Sokolov-Skalya, *Pravda*, Oct. 15, 1956.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paintings of an expressionist and non-photographic character. Since they had successfully fulfilled all academic requirements in the studio classes, these artists placed their teachers and the administration in an embarrassing position. Each day dozens of the curious gathered around the unconventional pictures. Adding a note of high spirits, these artists arranged a street demonstration with a huge portrait of a young man in pink drawers. The gathering attracted the attention of the militia but the young revolutionaries managed to explain to them that the young man in pink underpants was none other than Garibaldi and that among revolutionaries of Garibaldi's epoch it was fashionable to wear pink underpants.

However, the Chinese artists who were studying at the Academy proved to be more vigilant than the militia. They sent a delegation to Director Yoganson with an ultimatum which said that if the provocative actions of revisionists were not stopped in the students' dormitory, they would immediately depart for China. The director responded to this ultimatum by expelling the organizers of the demonstration.

In another incident, a group of young artists, poets, and actors in Leningrad offered their services to arrange a *soirée* and play dedicated to Franco-Soviet friendship in one of the largest halls of the city (House of Culture of Industrial Cooperation). The play envisioned a group of Soviet writers and artists on a tour of Europe, culminating in their meeting with Cézanne, van Gogh, Rimbaud and Verlaine in a Montmartre cabaret. Here, against a background of jazz and dancing girls, the poet Paul Verlaine raises his glass to toast the friendship between the USSR and France. At this point, the secretary of a district committee of the party rushed indignantly to the stage and tried to draw the curtain.

Again, in Leningrad in the spring of 1957, the students of the Polytechnic Institute invited a group of expressionist artists to hold an exhibit. They hoped that during the end-term rush the administration would be too busy to concern itself with the work shown at the exhibit. However, Leningrad party officials came to the opening, and closed the exhibit without further ado.

At about the same time an interesting experiment was in progress in Moscow. An international jury was set up to judge paintings at an exhibit of young painters just prior to the World Youth Festival in July 1957. This jury differed from the usual ones in that it met in open sessions, and anybody could bring his own works and be present at the time judgment was being passed on them. For the first time, a Soviet exhibit displayed a large number of paintings far removed from socialist realism. Embarrassed by this circumstance, the jury tried through their selection to minimize any undesirable effect such an exhibit might have. On the eve of the opening, after the jury had made their selection, N. A. Mikhailov, the then Minister of Culture, visited the exhibit and ordered several works by a number of painters and sculptors removed. But it was precisely these artists who won prizes from the international jury of the Festival. Louis Aragon even wrote an article on them in *Lettres Françaises*, while Pablo Neruda dispatched a telegram of congratulations. But the support of the international jury and world-renowned Communist writers did not prevent at least one of the prize-winners of the international exhibit from being told to stop his experimentation under the threat of being expelled from the Union of Artists and from the Communist Party.

Among other evidences of youthful experimentation, I might mention an exhibit of my works at the Physics Department of the Moscow University in May 1957 since, as far as I know, this was the only showing of abstract paintings during this period. In the course of three days it was visited by more than three thousand people, and the three-day discussions were attended by some 600 persons. The only reason the exhibit was permitted was that the administration did not always know what went on in the remote corners of the vast university building. On the third day, however, the organizers of the exhibit began to sense that the distance separating them from the administration was narrowing, and they hastened to close the exhibit. Several days later several very important persons arrived at the University to find out what the students had been discussing. On being told that the topic was the appearance of infusoria under the microscope, they left, seemingly reassured.

Prospects of a "Revisionist" Art

The time has not yet come to analyze the work of revisionist artists, nor even to list their names. This task will in time be done by Soviet critics, once the works of such artists have been displayed for general view. At present such an analysis would of necessity be extremely incomplete, since even the best-informed people are familiar with only an insignificant portion of what goes on in the vast USSR.

But at the very least, one can say that all the major trends of contemporary art have their followers in the USSR, although these individuals may not even be aware that there are artists in other countries working along the same lines. For instance, in 1957 there

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was an exhibit held in Moscow of the works of a young painter who had come from a small provincial town. This painter returned to his native town, having learned from his more sophisticated Moscow colleagues that his style was nothing but surrealism.

Without attempting to analyze the work of such artists, I would limit myself to a description of the conditions and atmosphere in which they work. In this connection one must not neglect to mention the material and psychological difficulties as well as the favorable circumstances which exist for unofficial art. There are only two possibilities for an artist who has dedicated himself to unofficial art. He must have a second, official occupation; or else he must divide his artistic efforts into official and unofficial work. The first difficulty is one encountered by many artists in all other countries, the only difference being that in other countries this difficulty may be a temporary one. Also, the Soviet artist in this situation is denied the opportunity to buy certain artists' materials available only to members of the Artists' Union. In the second case the main difficulties are psychological. The artist has to be sure that his second line of artistic activity, *i.e.*, his unofficial experimentation, will not become known to the Union, which he joined with the obligation to resist any deviations from the course of socialist realism. It is obvious that should it become known within the Union that one of its members has a split artistic personality, the Union will expel this hapless artist. Not having any other training, such an artist would find himself in a rather unfortunate position. Some artists find this split too painful to endure.

An artist who has another official occupation must, naturally, also refrain from publicizing his revisionist art. The degree of caution which he has to exercise in this is determined by the type of position he holds. The secretary of a party committee must exercise an altogether exceptional caution, while a janitor can do with much less. One cannot subsist on unofficial painting alone, despite the fact that there are well-to-do collectors of such art. Soviet law provides that those who do not work for the state are subject to exile. The only persons exempt from this law are invalids and married women. Adherence to this law is carefully and regularly checked by the police.

It is also clear that lack of opportunity to exhibit works of art, as well as insufficient contact with art abroad, hinder the development of new art in the USSR. Passing over some of the other and minor difficulties, I now turn with a great deal more pleasure to the circumstances which are favorable to the young artists working along lines other than socialist realism.

Three or four years ago only vague hints could be found in the Soviet press of "unhealthy trends" among individual young artists. These errant individuals were represented as isolated cases without any influence or response among youth generally. Apparently it was assumed that this "fashionable ailment" would pass without a trace. But the indifference of the press to new trends among young artists also had other and more serious causes. Open criticism of any trend in art only serves to increase the interest in it and the stubborn perseverance of its advocates. Criticism often helps the artist to find out that he is not the only one working along that particular line.

The fact that Yohanson, Gerasimov's comrade-in-arms and portrait painter of Soviet dignitaries, recently found it necessary to call upon Soviet artists to resist deviations from socialist realism and upon young artists to resist abstract art in particular, proves that such deviations have become a frequent phenomenon. But it is not clear how Yohanson ever learned of the existence of deviationist artists at all. For those among them who dare to deviate from socialist realism beyond the stage of impressionism certainly do not exhibit their works in places frequented by Yohanson. Where, then, are the paintings of such artists to be found?

Art, Science, and the Future

Admittedly, locating works of unofficial art and its collectors is almost as difficult as locating rocket installations. However, I know of one such place, and I will venture to speak of it here. It is the International Nuclear Research Institute at Dubna, situated not far from Moscow and employing physicists from various Communist countries. Completely abstract paintings can be found there, or at least could be only a few years ago, paintings acquired by physical scientists working at the Institute. I can vouch for the authenticity of this information, since I myself happen to have painted some of these canvasses between 1956 and 1958.

The connection between science and contemporary art, as several acute observers have pointed out, is no mere coincidence. However, it is apparently only in the USSR that this relationship has been consciously recognized by many scientists and artists and has contributed to real contact between them. It is no exaggeration to say that the support and interest given by the scientists to young experimental artists is the most important guarantee of the very existence of new art in the USSR. This interest is particularly frequent among those scientists who work in the most advanced

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fields of science—*e.g.*, atomic physics, physical chemistry, mathematics, and especially among young researchers in these fields. Perhaps the main reason for this receptiveness to new art is that most of the intellectual power of the country is concentrated in these areas of science. It is difficult to convince a man working with the concepts of quantum mechanics that the art forms of "socialist realists" like Alexander Gerasimov are the ultimate achievement of man's spirit.

Having both financial means and leisure, the scientist in the USSR can afford to acquire and enjoy works of art according to his own intellectual level. The knowledge that his work is of extreme importance to the state gives him a greater sense of independence and security than is enjoyed by others. Thus, to eliminate all possibility for young artists to deviate from socialist realism would require placing scientists in a situation where they would not dare to have works of unofficial art even in their own homes. In turn, this would mean reverting to those times when even the serenity of mathematicians was disturbed, with the well-known disastrous effects upon Soviet science. This brings us to a rather paradoxical conclusion: Those who wish their rockets to have a high degree of precision must reconcile themselves to no less than abstract art.

Of course, scientists are not alone in their interest in modern art. One could cite the names of eminent writers, poets, musicians, actors, directors—not to speak of young people in all walks of life—who are no less responsive to art that falls outside official dogma. People active in the fields of art and culture differ from scientists in being required from time to time to voice their condemnation of all deviations from socialist realism. They lead more public lives than do the scientists, and this hinders their collecting works of modern art. There are some writers, for instance, who collect unofficial art works only during periods when the attacks against revisionism subside.

One exception to this pattern is Ilya Ehrenburg, who, since 1956, has been extended the right to express both in the press and in books his admiration for Western art ranging from Monet to Picasso. One cannot but admire the skill and enthusiasm with which Ehrenburg has used this privilege in fulfilling the task which would otherwise have required a whole army of art historians—the task of informing the Soviet population about the most important developments in art during the past century. It is from his latest book, the autobiography "People, Years, Life" (1961),[3] that Soviet readers are becoming aware of such artists as Chagall, Soutine, Modigliani, and other great modern innovators.

It seems clear enough that the complicated sequence of events since Stalin's death has created a powerful trend toward experimentation in Soviet art. Although an increasing amount of it has become publicly visible, this kind of painting is still mainly covert. At the moment it is easier for Soviet artists to conceive new creative ideas than to execute them. Yet there is an advantage in this condition, since such artists are unencumbered by considerations of financial reward or popular success, and can therefore be guided in their creative efforts solely by spontaneous interest.

Although one would be foolhardy to risk a precise prediction, it is not unlikely that some of the most interesting developments in the art of the next few decades will emerge on Russian soil. Young Soviet artists, having traveled in a few years the road for which the West needed fifty or more years, may well prove to be less fettered by tradition and more easily infected with enthusiasm for new possibilities than their Western brethren. Their recognition, however, will come only if and when the present group of bureaucrat-artists—all powerful holdovers from the Stalin era—ceases to dominate the artistic life of the country.

[3] Published in 1961 by MacGibbon & Key (London), under the title *People and Life*.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What is Left of the "Left"?

The Social Basis of American Communism,
by Nathan Glazer.
Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1961.

Writers on the Left,
by Daniel Aaron.
Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1961.

Reviewed by William C. Gausmann

THESE ARE THE latest volumes in the Fund for the Republic's series on Communist influence in American life. Since this series of studies already includes *The Communists and the Schools* (by Robert W. Iverson, 1959) and *Communism and the Churches* (by Ralph Lord Roy, 1960), and will contain investigations of Communist influence among artists and in the mass media, one wonders whether perhaps the Fund has not been a bit too generous.

But let us not be churlish. It has made possible Theodore Draper's two splendid books on pre-Popular-Front communism, (*The Roots of American Communism,* 1957, and *American Communism and Soviet Russia,* 1959) and David Shannon's useful *The Decline of American Communism* (1959). Draper is now at work on a third volume, and one day there should appear what promises to be a fine study of Communist activity in American trade unions by Daniel Bell and a team of collaborators.

Beyond doubt a review of Communist advances towards American intellectuals and the American middle classes generally was needed, and there are provocative sections in both these books. What is not so clear after reading Mr. Aaron's book is whether there really is enough to say to justify separate studies of Communist tactics among writers, painters, clergymen and actors. A goodly fraction of all one needs to know about these adventures had already been said in Irving Howe's and Lewis Coser's *The American Communist Party* (published without Fund sponsorship in 1957 and reissued in paperback in 1962), in the Draper and Shannon narratives, and, as far as the "left writers" are concerned, in Murray Kempton's not fully appreciated *Part of Our Time* (1955).

Mr. Aaron set out in his book to write "a social chronicle of the Left Wing writer from 1912 to the early 1940's." His accounts of the peregrinations of Max Eastman, Floyd Dell, Lincoln Steffens and a few other pre-World War I American "revolutionary" writers, who subsequently identified with the Communist movement, are excellent. So are his sketches of the "professional proletarian" writer, Mike Gold, and of Joseph Freeman and Granville Hicks, the two devoted if never quite Stalinized leaders of Popular Front literary culture. But as a critical study of the literary production of Communist-influenced writers or as an analysis of the ways in which the party used them, Aaron's volume is deficient. One wishes that he had developed more fully his treatment of the debates of Gold and the commissars versus the politically committed but artistically scrupulous authors.

MUCH MORE COULD have been said about the relations between the party and the "established writers," who, strenuously wooed, came a good part of the way to meet it after 1935, and about the less solicitous treatment accorded Gold's disciples—the "proletarian writers" to whom Aaron gives as short shrift as the party itself did. There are other things one misses, too. Just what were the reactions of the latter group to the ukases of the party's literary commissars? And what compensation did the party offer the Communist writers for pushing them out of the spot light in favor of the Hemingways and, indeed, a film script writer like Donald Ogden Stewart and a crime story monger like Dashiel Hammet? The exploitative promotion of these authors, who never risked their earnings by injecting political content into their writing, was one of the more unpleasant features of Popular Front culture, and

---

Mr. Gausmann, until recently Labor Information Officer in the London branch of the U.S. Information Service, has written extensively for American and British labor and trade union journals. His reviews appear frequently in these pages.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aaron tells us virtually nothing about it. Merely to quote Earl Browder, the late CPUSA General Secretary, on how he cared not about literature but about the ways of using writers for the party's benefit, is not telling enough.

Another omission is Aaron's paucity of reference either to the impact on writers of the venerable Professor John Dewey's commission of inquiry into Trotsky's "guilt," or to the more widely supported first Committee for Cultural Freedom which before the end of the 1930's branded the Soviet Union along with Germany "totalitarian." It is true, shockingly true, that of those "left" writers who turned to the CP in the early 1930's only Edmund Wilson and James T. Farrell had more than a nodding acquaintance with Marx; and those who came along after 1935 didn't even bother to read Lenin. The true political education of the American intellectual left was begun only just prior to the Stalin-Hitler pact by a handful of writers like Wilson and Farrell, abetted by John Dewey and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, whose radicalism was more enduring as well as more perceptive than the skin-deep progressivism of the writers gathered under the pink banners of the Popular Front. This intellectual and political offensive has also had much to do with the absence of any significant intellectual support for the metaphysics of the war-time alliance with the Soviets or the party-sponsored Wallace movement in the 1948 presidential campaign. It is indeed an important facet of the period to which Aaron confined himself, but, again, he has failed to tell the story.

MR. GLAZER'S *The Social Basis of American Communism* is a little volume concerned with the sources of Communist support in the United States. Of the five essays it contains only one breaks new ground. Draper, Howe and Coser, and Shannon in his *The Socialist Party of America* have dealt adequately with the pre-history of the CPUSA. Labor historians have analyzed the CP's sparse contribution to American labor history before the advent of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), and the party's frustrated courtship of the American Negro has been sufficiently discussed in the books which Glazer cites.

His fourth chapter, however, entitled "Jews and Middle Class Groups and the Party," is worth reflection. As Glazer says, no one, Communist or anti-Communist, has hitherto commented straightforwardly upon the fact that during much of its history the Communist Party of the United States has had a near majority of members of Jewish backgrounds, and that this fact alone accounts for the middle class make-up of its rank-and-file. Of the various immigrant groups who supplied the party's original membership the mobile second generation of Jews alone came to the CP in any numbers during the Popular Front days. Glazer's point is that the insecurity of the second-generation Jews' middle class status and the discriminations which they faced was what made them uniquely susceptible to a "left" appeal.

There are, none the less, a few points which need be added or stated a little differently. The cultural aspirations of the Jewish immigrants were vastly more cosmopolitan than those of the other ethnic groups from which the Communists initially drew a large proportion of the old Socialist Party. "Labor Zionism" as well as communism and American liberalism competed for the allegiance of the American-born children of East European Jewish parents. To many of them Zionism seemed a part of the Old-World Jewishness from which they sought escape.

What is more, Hitler, about whom Glazer speaks too little, was on the rampage by the middle 1930's, and democracy, socialist or non-socialist, seemed unable to stop him, or at least to stop him without an alliance with Stalin. At home, American capitalism, still in the midst of depression, also appeared discredited, along with European bourgeois culture and democratic socialism. The absence in the United States of a well-based social democratic movement and the lack of firm direction in the Democratic Party, which traditionally has attracted the bulk of the left-oriented minority groups, narrowed the political choice of the second-generation American Jews even further.

This was the moment when young men like John Gates, whose father's little business had failed as the boy was entering New York's City College, turned to the CP. A year or two later, when the Popular Front burgeoned and the Spanish Civil War overshadowed the Moscow Trials, insecure young professional and sub-professional people came in large numbers, and at no personal sacrifice, to join the myriad new front organizations. There was little pressure to join the CP itself, and participation at the fringes of the party was an undemanding, even Americanizing experience. For many middle-class and lower-middle-class second-generation Americans, this was a most satisfactory opportunity: it permitted them to be "revolutionary" and "on the make" at the same time.

Since then much has changed, and it is unlikely that communism will ever again have an "influence in American life" sufficient to prompt even the most generous foundation to underwrite an investigation of it. The lessons of Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe,

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the subjugation of Hungary in 1956, and the public revelation of Stalin's crimes have left their solid mark. The democratic countries of Western Europe have since the war reached unprecedented economic prosperity, leaving the standards of Communist-ruled Eastern Europe far behind. In the United States, new and effective tools of economic control have banished the fear of serious cyclical upheavals. The national balance in both major American political parties is now with those who believe in at least a minimum of welfare legislation and governmental economic control. In the universities teachers and researchers in the social sciences now sophisticatedly probe social problems for which in the 1930's the Marxists seemed to have the most convincing answers. Writers are again, thank heavens, in revolt. But as their targets are the purveyors of mass culture, it seems hardly likely that they will turn to Khrushchev's Russia for solace.

A Hungarian Don Quixote in Moscow

Egy regény regénye
(The novel of a novel),
by Ervin Sinko.
Forum, Novi Sad, 1961.

Reviewed by George Gömöri

FEW FOREIGN COMMUNISTS survived Stalin's purges, but even fewer dared to keep a record of them. Ervin Sinko, a Hungarian writer of Jewish origin (and after the First World War a Yugoslav citizen) is one of those few. Born in 1898, Sinko played an important part in the Hungarian Bolshevik revolution of 1919, escaping to Vienna after the collapse of the Communist dictatorship. Fifteen years later, still in exile—this time in Paris—he typed the last sentence of a huge novel, *The Optimists*. In it, Sinko made a genuine and probably unique attempt at presenting the story of Bela Kun's short-lived regime as seen from a revolutionary point of view. Although the story was both honest and fascinating in baring the doubts which tormented the young Communist intellectuals at that time and in painting the Communist leaders in essentially human and realistic colors, Sinko was unable to find a publisher for it in France.

When he finished *The Optimists*, Sinko was literally starving. In a fit of despair, he sent the manuscript to Romain Rolland. The reaction of the venerable man of letters was enthusiastic: he praised the author fulsomely, and advised him to publish his novel in the USSR. Not unnaturally, Sinko was moved by Rolland's response and, with some encouragement from a Soviet official, left for Moscow in 1935. This proved to be the starting-point of "the novel of a novel" (the English translation of *Egy regény regénye*), precipitating, as it did, the fantastic adventures of this lean Hungarian Don Quixote in the frustrating and bureaucracy-ridden land of the Soviets.

When he arrived in the USSR, Sinko was still a Communist sympathizer, although he had broken with the party a few years back. By the time he left the country, in 1937, most of his illusions were shattered and his faith in communism undermined, if not completely destroyed. "The Novel of a Novel" is the case history of Sinko's disillusionment, a slow and painful process unfolding through the author's daily confrontations with reality. Cautioning himself not to judge rashly, he at first tried to ignore and to explain away the unpleasant features of the system. However, already in the first weeks after his arrival he was bothered by problems such as: "Why is it that all artistic performances which I have seen here so far, with the exception of the Shostakovich opera, were surprisingly poor . . . completely empty and anaemic?" (p. 167). Officially approved *kitsch* and the tasteless adoration of Stalin were the first things to arouse Sinko's criticism. Soon afterwards he found himself at loggerheads with the Soviet bureaucracy, and as time went on his tug-of-war with officialdom—which, for reasons to him unknown, was sabotaging the publication of *The Optimists* in the USSR—evolved into a masochistic search for people with authority who would have the courage to

Mr. Gömöri is a Hungarian journalist and writer who fled his native country after the October 1956 uprising. He is now on the staff of St. Antony's College, Oxford University.

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

support him or his case without official approval from above. After a series of disappointments, Sinko arrived at the conclusion that the most common feature of Soviet society was a fear of responsibility on the part of the officials. Still later even this observation proved to be inadequate and he found a monosyllabic word to express the essence of the system—fear.

In Stalin's Russia everybody was afraid, with or without reason. As the Moscow Trials brought forth more and more "revelations," fear and terror began to penetrate every echelon of Soviet society, from the highest to the lowest. As one who was present at the Stalinist "counter-revolution," and as a perceptive observer of human behavior, Sinko excels not only in describing the atmosphere of thickening fear and growing insecurity, but also in providing illuminating explanations of the psychology of the defendants at the purge trials, the Old Bolsheviks who, by confessing to the monstrously absurd charges against them, in effect committed public suicide. In his view, every resistance to Stalin's omnipotent apparatus was doomed to failure:

I do not underestimate individual moral strength and individual responsibility, but it would [be impossible] not to admit that at that time, perhaps not to the same extent, yet without exception everybody in the Soviet Union fell victim to the general feeling of demoralization. If not fear, it was the realization of one's total helplessness that evoked and deepened this growing demoralization. . . (p. 261)

During his years in the Soviet Union Sinko met numerous interesting writers and political personalities—Russians, Germans, and Hungarians—with some of whom he was on very intimate terms. He is thus able to offer frequently fascinating accounts of ways in which various individuals coped with the problem of physical and moral survival under Stalin. Sinko's descriptions of Bela Kun, whom he knew from the latter's heyday as leader of the short-lived Communist dictatorship in Hungary, of Gorki, whom he met only fleetingly but observed thoroughly, and of Babel, with whom he shared a flat, are extremely valuable, as they not only depict, but cut people open, revealing their hidden inner cores. For example, the Kun of 1935 seemed to be much more generous and "liberal" than the one-time ruthless dictator of revolutionary Hungary; speaking of the past, he would turn to Sinko and say: "It was one of our stupidest mistakes to attempt to reshape people after a model" (p. 200). When Malraux visited the Soviet Union, Sinko met him several times and noted down an interesting version of Gorki's encounter with Malraux (related to the author by Babel), in which the two writers became involved in a controversy on almost every conceivable topic, including Joyce and Dostoevski. The most moving and impressive pages of "The Novel of a Novel," however, are devoted to the author of the Odessan Stories, Isaac Babel. Sinko found Babel's personality enchanting and thought very highly of him, only to witness his friend's desperate and merciless struggle for survival, which ended in a breach of friendship between them.

These portraits alone would make Sinko's book important reading. Yet he displays an additional virtue, one that is not common amongst writers describing their own past. The author of "The Novel of a Novel" is clearly a very honest man, open and sincere often to the point of recklessness. He believes in the historical and moral desirability or even necessity of socialism, but would never subscribe to lies, distortions and inhuman acts committed in the name of this ideal. Sinko's reaction to the shockingly vulgar tone of a certain debate in the Soviet Writers' Association, to the attacks against Shostakovich or Eisenstein, or to the behavior of some fellow-emigres who perfected the technique of doublethink, is strikingly uniform: it is one of indignation mixed with disgust. These feelings arise in him in spite of the fact that he tries hard to remain loyal to his principles, and in spite of the anguish with which he feels compelled to denounce Stalin's system as having almost nothing in common with socialism. It is his human and intellectual honesty that brought about his total break with a regime and a system that had at one time claimed his most passionate allegiance.

The Optimists was not published in the Soviet Union, yet despite this, and despite Sinko's deepening hostility to the Stalinist regime, he succeeded in returning to Paris in 1937, and thence—a few years later—to Yugoslavia. A partisan during the war, Sinko hailed Tito's break with the Cominform in 1948 as "our second revolution." Remaining to this day a loyal supporter of the Yugoslav leader, he saw the publication of both volumes of *The Optimists* in the middle 1950's, and shortly thereafter—of "The Novel of a Novel." The novel is—as mentioned before—fascinating. The "Novel of a Novel," however, is more than that: it is a major document of our times. It remains to be hoped that the book will be translated into other languages, and thus made available to a wider reading public, still inadequately informed of (in the author's words) "the moral and political tragedy of the Russian and European Communist parties" in the era of Stalin.*

* As this issue was about to go to press, word was received that Mr. Sinko's book will appear in German later this year (Verlag für Wissenschaft und Politik, Cologne).—Ed

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED